

No. 432.] Round and round staggered the locked enemies, both powerless to escape each other's hug. The blonde man was the coolest, while Salamander Sam's face was purple, his eyes bulged nearly out, and his tongue was hanging from his mouth. "When you get enough, let me know," Blonde Bill said.

[1d.

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# DEADWOOD DICK'S DISCOVERY.

## A ROMANCE OF THE "SILENT TONGUES."

### CHAPTER I.

#### OVERLAND.—THE SWOOP OF THE SILENT TONGUES.



FROM Del Norte to the southwestern mines of Colorado, along the rapid and impetuous waters of the Rio de las Animas, and through the rugged, mountainous district of San Juan county, runs the stage-trail, which is used in lieu of a railroad, as a route of transportation both of people and supplies, into the mines that abound in the vicinity of Silverton and Animas City.

All the way from the Waggonwheel Gap to Bullion City the route is wild and tortuous in the extreme. After leaving Bullion City, a mining town of considerable importance, the traveller soon strikes the San Juan valley, and the rushing Animas, and follows through its rugged line of march towards the Gulf.

As evening was drawing near, one balmy October day, the lull of repose was rudely awakened by the sharp cracking, as of a whip, and a loud, rumbling, jolting sound—then the south-bound stage rolled into view, from round a bend, drawn by three spans of spirited horses, that in turn were held in hand by a little Canadian Jehu, who, from long experience, thoroughly understood his business.

No ordinary affair, this stage, as any observer would have at once perceived, for it was double the usual size of such vehicles, thereby bringing into use a greater number of horses, and it was neatly furnished, too. That night it was literally loaded down, both with passengers and luggage.

Every seat in the interior was occupied, and even the flat top had been converted into a carry-all, for it was occupied by several persons of both sexes.

The occupants of the interior of the Monitor, as the stage was called, were all men—mostly rough, bearded, red-shirted miners, with a sprinkling of ruffians, speculators, and gamblers.

Upon the outside, the passengers were of a more varying type.

So let us grasp the flying moment for an inventory of the personnel of those upon the roof of the Monitor.

La Carte, the Jehu, is known all through the mining districts of the Colorados as an expert linesman, a dead-shot, and a fear-naught of the boldest outlaw that ever robbed a stage.

Next to him, upon the driver's seat, is a portly, distinguished-looking personage, with brown hair, moustache and side-whiskers, and eyes to match. He is attired in the very height of elegance as to costume, and evidently is a man of some importance. His name is the Hon. Ray Vernon, of Ohio. He sits on the right of La Carte; next to him, upon the top of the stage, are two bordermen—one, a little old man, with wrinkled features and silvered locks; the other, a giant in stature, with a positively ugly countenance.

Next to the giant sits a clerical gentleman of solemn mien, and a remarkably pretty and vivacious young lady, who evidently is his daughter; then comes a dandyish fellow, of handsome face and form, whose dress is a model of elegance; then another lady and gentleman, upon whom the other passengers centre considerable attention.

This woman is slight of figure, and is clad in black of costly kind, and wears a heavy veil constantly over her face, thereby screening it from the inquiring gaze of the passengers.

The man is of medium size, attired in a stylish suit of light cloth, with a shirt-front of spotless white, ornamented by a blazing diamond stud, while he has a jaunty white slouch sombrero upon his head, and alligator top-boots upon his feet, the legs of which reach above his knees.

In face and feature he is prepossessing—his white complexion harmonising well with his long blonde hair, and sweeping moustache of the same hue. His mouth has a firm expression, and his forehead is



broad and intellectual, while his eyes are hidden behind a pair of green goggles, that give him a strange appearance.

A belt about his waist contains a pair of serviceable revolvers, and a Winchester rifle is among his effects as luggage.

All the other outside passengers are armed, except the man from Ohio, the clerical gentleman, and the two ladies, none of whom appear to carry weapons of defence. Especially was the big border-man well armed, for his belt boasted of no fewer than six formidable revolvers, and a huge knife that glittered dangerously.

"I tell ye what, et don't pay fer ter go unarmed in this kentry!" he observed, after surveying those of the passengers who were unarmed, with a critical glance. "A galoot ain't safe unless he kerries a hull battery hitched onter his waist. Hallo! captin, I see ye don't go none on six-shooters?"

"No, my friend," the clerical man replied, solemnly. "I ask for no weapons other than those heaven has given me."

"Oho! that's et, hey? Hain't no fight in you then, I'll allow?"

"I get not my living, sir, by fighting my fellow-creatures," was the reply. "I am a servant of the Lord, and I preach his word to the flock with which he peopled the earth. If a man smite me upon my right cheek, I rise not in anger, but turn about my left cheek, that he may smite that, also!"

"Waal, I'll be shot ef I quite agree wi' yer doctrine, Purfessor," the giant replied, grimly. "Et don't hitch wi' ther great state of hooman affairs out in this kentry. Here am I, Beautiful Bill, ther Apoller o' ther Nor'west—ther great Pet Elerfant o' ther Leadville trail—that's me. This leetle squinged-up cuss aside me, air Old Avalanche, familiarly rekernised in modern spellin'-books as ther Great Annihilator—ther Devastatin' Eppydemic o' ther West. Waal, now, ye see, we've jined forces an' capertal, an' now constitute ther Death Committee of ther Mines. Ye'll heer uv us everywhar whar ther auriferous vegetates—a sure extarminatin' pestilence fer outlaws, hoss-thieves, card-sharps, an' ruffians.

"Our pulpit's a tarred rope—our platform et be ther limb o' ther fust convenient tree. Now, I'll bet ary pilgrim a bite right out o' my off ear, thet we, ther great Trans-Atlantic an' Pacific Death Committee, an' Society fer Practical Elevation, kin convert more sinners in one minnit, then a burro-load o' preachers, or any other sich critters. That's me, Beautiful Bill, ther Grecian Apoller o' San Won county."

A smile went round among the passengers at the giant's speech, in which the clerical party did not participate.

At this juncture the stage plunged more rapidly down through a narrower portion of the canyon valley, where it was darker and more weirdly gloomy.

"Now, feller-citizens, git yer pepper-boxes in shape, an' keep yer eyes open, ef ye've got a full hand o' swag!" announced Beautiful Bill, "fer we're sailin' right inter a prime locality fer outlaws. S'pect ye've heerd about ther Silent Tongues, an' how they tackle this trail twicet ev'ry month? Reckon thar don't much swag git thru on ther Monitor them nights, eh, Carte?"

"Hardly ever," the stage-driver replied, grimly. "To-night is the regular time for a raid, that's true. I had nearly forgotten it. Bad, too!"

"Why bad?" the man from Ohio demanded, anxiously.

"Because there's a full treasure-box to-night. See the man with the goggles?"

"Yes."

"Waal, he's got a heap o' gold aboard, an' a heap of greenbacks, too."

"Who is he?"

"Don't know, 'cept someone up at Lake City called him Blonde Bill. He got on there along wi' the veiled woman."

The Hon. Ray Vernon took the liberty to turn his seat, and gaze keenly at the blonde stranger. When he turned again to La Carte, he spoke in an undertone:

"So he has considerable treasure, eh? Where is he bound for?"

"Deadwood Dick's Discovery, the new strike 'twixt Silverton and Parrott City. 'Tain't much of a place yet, but they say there's good prospects of a new Leadville."

The Ohioan was silent a few minutes, after which he continued:

"This Deadwood Dick is an outlaw, isn't he?"

"No—that is, he ain't any more. Thet used to be his profession. But they say he quit off a while ago. Et don't do him much good, however, fer ther people have got a grudge agin' him, and won't let him alone. Fer instance, he is sed'to have discovered the new mines that bear his name, but a gang from Silverton went down and cleared him out and took possession. Ah! the imps! outlaws! the Silent Tongues are upon us!"

The horses had been suddenly hurled back upon their haunches, thereby bringing the stage to a standstill in the gloomy canyon.

Then out from many a niche and sheltering rock poured a crowd of dusky figures, masked, and armed to the teeth, and sur-



rounded the stage in less time than it takes to tell it.

"No use to offer resistance, boys!" La Carte shouted. "They're two to our one, an' hev got the drop!"

"Fight's the word!" cried the blonde stranger, as he sprang to his feet, a cocked revolver in each hand. "Rally, all! the dogs must not touch the treasure-box!"

Beautiful Bill and Avalanche were instantly by the blonde man's side, weapons in hand.

And also the individual who wore an imperial and waxed moustache.

"Give it to 'em!" the blonde man cried, "an' charge it to Blonde Bill. Fight for your lives, and the safety and preservation of your rights!"

No second time did the blonde man have to speak; for the weapons of the others poured a volley of death into the ranks of the outlaws even as did his own.

But the passengers were not the only ones to fire, for the Silent Tongues—so called because they were never heard to speak—returned the fusillade with interest.

The miners within the coach also engaged in the fight, by firing from the windows, and there within the gloomy depths of San Juan canyon waged such a battle as had ne'er been fought there before.

The canyon caught up and echoed the ringing of the pistol-shots, the bullets beat a death's tattoo against the rugged walls.

Madly, determinedly, desperately fought the defenders, Blonde Bill in the front, and the others close beside him.

"Great ham-bone, thet war ther bee-line fer old Joner! they've plugged it to yer leddy!" the Annihilator cried, in the blonde man's ear, then he turned to fire again into the swarming outlaw ranks.

Suddenly there was a wild, shrill scream, as of a mountain eagle.

Blonde Bill was kneeling beside the veiled woman.

But it was not his cry that echoed through the canyon.

Another had uttered the cry; the outlaws heard it, paused, hesitated, and then, as if by unanimous consent, beat a precipitate retreat from the scene of the attack.

## CHAPTER II.

### A SAD RITE.—A QUEER AUCTION.

"GREAT ham-bone thet discombobberated ther terrestriyal gravitation uv old Joner!" the Annihilator cried, springing forward to the blonde man's side, as the

Silent Tongues disappeared. "Hev they hurt yer leddy, pilgrim?"

"Yes," was the husky reply; "may God's wrath be upon them; they have killed her."

"All aboard!" shouted La Carte, who, along with the minister and the Ohioan, had taken no part in the fight; "all aboard. Who goes on the Monitor!"

"Stop!" the sport of the waxed moustache cried, covering the driver with a revolver. "Don't ye see we've got a dead lady here? Just you hold up, if you please."

"Can't help if ye've got a dozen of 'em," La Carte replied, drawing up on the reins. "This 'ere stage hes got to go through on time!"

"Oh! et haz, haz it?" roared a stentorian voice, and the next minute the little Canadian found himself held high above the head of Beautiful Bill, supported horizontally by a pair of arms that never once quivered. "Oh! ye wull, wull ye?" the giant repeated, with a malicious grin. "Oh! ye'd forgot thet Beautiful Bill was on deck, hedn't ye? I, ther great variegated, sweet-scented Apollor o' ther West, ther old original Pet Elerfant o' ther Leadville Trail, ther left bower o' the famuss Death Committee o' ther Mines. Yas, ye'd forgot all about that leetle fack, on course. Aire ye goin' ter start ther stage, ye ill-favoured son o' a galoot, ef I set ye onto yer feet ag'in?"

"Course you, yes!" the Canadian grated, savagely. "I'll tear yer heart out!"

"Bet yer pile ye lie!" the giant replied. "I'll fix you fer a coroner's inquest, an' drive the stage myself."

The next instant the giant had hurled the Canadian half-way across the canyon, from the poise above his head, and he struck the hard ground with a dull thud, the sound of which seemed pregnant with a deadly meaning.

Blonde Bill turned to the sport.

"What is your handle?" he asked, wiping the tears from his cheeks.

"They generally call me Rosebud Rob," the other replied, bowing.

The blonde man then started a trifle.

"I have heard of you," he said, extending his hand. "Will you hand me her"—with a glance towards the dead lady—"when I get to the ground? I will bury her somewhere in this vicinity."

"I will assist you, certainly," Rosebud Rob replied.

The next instant Blonde Bill had climbed down from the stage-top to the ground, the passengers regarding him curiously.



Rosebud Rob then raised the form of the dead woman, and handed it into the blonde man's extended arms, Bill receiving it with a simple bow as acknowledgment of his thanks.

"You may go ahead with the stage now," he said, addressing the giant, who stood erect in La Carte's seat, with whip and reins in hand.

Then Blonde Bill turned about, and strode up the gulch, carrying the body of his dead companion in his strong arms.

The next instant the crack of the long-lashed whip was heard, and the stage rolled away down the canyon.

In an opposite course, Blonde Bill made his way for several moments; then paused and looked round.

As he did so, he found himself face to face with the sport, Rosebud Rob.

"What! you here?" the blonde man exclaimed, in surprise.

"Yes; pardon the intrusion, but I had a curiosity to know more of a pilgrim that can shoot the way you can, and thought I might be of some assistance to you," the sport replied. "It didn't look fair to leave you alone to take care of the dead, and so I dropped off."

"I thank you, sincerely," Blonde Bill replied, warmly. "I shall not forget your kindness."

He laid the body upon a plot of fresh, green grass, and bowed down before her and wept. Not in a loud, obtrusive way—the falling of a tear now and then, and a convulsive shaking of the form being all the symptoms perceptible of his terrible grief.

When he turned again to the sport, all signs of his grief had vanished, save, mayhap, a trifle of paleness to his cheek.

"She was my wife," he said, huskily; "and as true and faithful as an angel. May God gather her to his fold, and permit me to live that I may wreak vengeance upon her murderer! Come! let's bury her!"

A little ravine branched off from the main canyon, and up this they carried the body to a green, grassy slope, shaded by a great hemlock.

Then, with their knives, they dug out a grave of sufficient dimensions for the purpose intended, and wrapping a heavy blanket round the corpse, laid it in its last resting-place.

Sticks and boughs were then so arranged as to protect the body, when the dirt was covered over; then the grave was filled by Rosebud Rob, while the blonde man knelt beside it in silent prayer.

When the last of the mould had been

heaped over the remains, he rose and grasped the sport's hand warmly.

"May God bless you for your kindness," he said, in a choked voice, "and put it in my power to amply repay you. Come; let us follow the stage on to Silverton. I will yet make this mining country too hot for these so-called Silent Tongues!"

"Silverton, then, is your destination?" the sport inquired.

"Yes—thereabouts. My game is to break up the Silent Tongues, and rid the Las Animas region of some of its ruffianly and villainous element."

"Then you may count me in, too, providing you have no objections," Rosebud Rob answered. "I ain't no modern Samson, ner I don't pretend to be a prime factor o' this world's arithmetick; but ef there's any fun on hand ye'll generlly find me a man to suit all circumstances."

"Then you are the very man I want for a pard," Blonde Bill answered, with decision.

\* \* \* \* \*

Silverton, Colorado, the lively little town of the San Juan mountain districts—was the pride of the Animas.

Though composed only of shanties and cabins dotted about without any attempt at regularity, it had an enormous floating population, and was considered one of the roughest places in South-western Colorado.

The fact of Colorado's being a recognised State of the Union, a State and municipal government, does not in the least deter Silverton from having its street fights and daily demand for coroner's inquests, nor does it discountenance the various phases of fast life peculiar to all mining centres.

On the early evening of the day succeeding the bold attempt of the Silent Tongues to rob the stage in San Juan valley, two persons rode down the busy main street of Silverton, mounted upon a pair of burros of the ugliest possible appearance.

One of the persons was a young woman, or maiden, of perhaps eighteen years—a prettily-proportioned girl, with an equally pretty face of a decidedly independent type, relieved by a pair of saucy brown eyes, and a mouth that could relax from gravity to a broad smile in a single instant. Her hair was of extreme length, as it fell in an auburn wave over her shoulders, and was crowned by a jaunty straw hat. Her riding habit, although coarse, was also neat and tasty.

Her companion was a swarthy man of forty-five, with jet-black hair and beard, and features of a most repulsive cast. His dress was rough and greasy, and a small arsenal of weapons occupied his belt.



As this strangely contrasted couple rode through the street, general attention was turned upon them by the crowds of men who peopled the busy thoroughfare, and more than once the name of "Salamander Sam" was spoken by resident Silver-tonians.

The girl, it was discovered, was bound to the saddle, and her hands were secured behind her back, clearly proving that she was a prisoner in the hands of the swarthy ruffian.

Straight down the street rode the ruffian, until he came to a large shanty designated by a sign "Hotel," when he drew rein upon his own and the maiden's horses.

In a moment, thereafter, a dense crowd had collected around them, inquiringly.

At first the ruffian gazed at them fiercely, without any seeming disposition to speak, but after a while he rose in his stirrups, and cried:

"My name's Salamander Sam, pilgrims, ef ye don't know me, an' I've come down here ter sell this yere gal at auction ter ther highest bidder. She's my darter, is Dashin' Doll, an' I opine ef I want ter sell her, that's my bizness. She ar' a tricky beast, an' last night she tried ter carve me wi' a dagger, but et didn't work. I happened ter be a leetle ther spriest, an' cotched her at it. So, now, feller-citizens, ef enny o' ye want 'er, jest give me a start-in' bid. How much do I hear, neow?"

"Gentlemen, for the love of God, rescue me from this ruffian's power," the girl cried, pleadingly. "He is a bad, wicked man, and I only defended myself. Help me, I pray!"

"Shet up, will ye!" Salamander Sam roared, whipping out a pair of revolvers from his belt and cocking them. "Ef ye don't want me ter murder ye, jest keep mum. I'm master o' these sarymonies, I am, an' I'm goin' ter sell ye ter ther highest bidder. How much'll ye giv fer her, boyees—how much, now, hoss an' all? Durst ary man start 'er at any price? Gal an' hoss! how much do I heer now, fer ther goodwill an' fixtures—sole right and title—how much, now?"

"I'll give ye five dollars fer ther burro," said a brutal-looking Kentuckian. "Don't want the petticoater at no price."

"Hoss an' gal must go tergether!" announced Salamander Sam. "Five dollars I'm bid, pilgrims—five dollars I'm bid; who makes et ten? Jest think, a fust-class burro an' a gal, as purty as a posey, an' five dollars all I'm offered. Why, ye durned galoots, ther gal's wuth a ten, ter say nothing about the gol-durned burro!"

"Hallo!" sang out a bystander; "heer cums Van Syckel, ther minister! He'll raise ther bid."

"The Lord forbid," the reverend gentleman said, as he came forward, and was acquainted with the rare opportunity held forth by Salamander Sam. "My good friend, knowest thou not the grievous sin thou'rt committing by putting up so comely a maid at public auction?"

"You torkin' ter me?" the ruffian demanded, with a scowl.

"Ay, good sir; it is within my heart to persuade you from your unholy purpose."

"Lookkee heer, old hoss, I'm assumin' ther 'sponsibility o' this funeral, ef I know myself, an' don't want no slack. This gal's my darter, an' ef I wanten sell her, I'm goin' ter do it, an' kin lick enny son uv a coyote es sez nay. Ef ye wanten save ther gal, an' make her a pillar uv Christendom, bid on her, or keep yer valve closed!"

This response elicited a general laugh from the crowd, for the Reverend Mr. Van Syckel was no favourite among the rude and unreligious miners of Silver-ton.

"Cum, gents!" Salamander Sam cried, beginning to grow impatient, "will ye let me talk myself hoarse over ther virtues uv ther gal an' ther mule? Fer heaven's sake raise ther bid enough so I can git decently drunk. Whoop her up, now; how much do I hear?"

"I will give you a hundred dollars for the girl," a man said, as he stepped forward—a stranger, by the way, and no less a party than the Honourable Ray Vernon, of Ohio!

### CHAPTER III.

#### MISS VAN SYCKEL'S WARNING.

SEVERAL hours after the termination of the street scene, introducing the peculiar auction of Salamander Sam, Blonde Bill stood upon the verandah of the Leviathan Hotel, which, by the way, is Silver-ton's principal hostelry.

He was clad in a faultless costume of spotless duck, with patent leathers of elegant fit upon his feet, and a jaunty wool hat upon his blonde head.

He appeared to be enjoying the busy scene upon the street, for it was yet early evening, and the whole population of the lovely little town seemed to be abroad.

As he was thus standing, two persons came down the street, and passed the hotel. The one was Rosebud Rob, the sport, and the other was a girl, attired in male garb throughout, a wily, handsome creature, with dusky, passionate eyes, a mouth of



sweet expression, and a mass of wavy brown hair, which blew unconfined over her shoulders.

The sport was in the advance, and evidently not accompanying the girl, if indeed he knew her, which was not probable.

As he caught a glimpse of her, a strange change came over Blonde Bill, and he half started forward, only to step back again, a resolute expression settling around his mouth.

"Did you think you knew the woman?"

The words were addressed to him, plainly enough, and he turned to find another young woman standing by his side, which she had reached without his hearing her.

She was richly attired in a stylish and costly street costume, consisting of a fine silk walking-dress, a knit shawl, and prettily-trimmed hat, and Blonde Bill had no difficulty in recognising her as the young lady who had accompanied the minister at the time of the stage robbery.

"Ah! excuse me," he said, doffing his hat with a gallant bow; "were you speaking to me, lady?"

The minister's daughter nodded, with a piquant smile.

"Yes," she said, pleasantly, "I was asking you if you knew the bold creature in male attire?"

"If my memory does not belie me, I think I have met her before," Blonde Bill replied. "Why do you ask, pray?"

"Oh! merely because I saw you start at sight of her, and partly, perhaps, for an excuse to introduce myself," was the frank, laughing reply. "I saw you standing here, and wanted to ask you how is the lady who was shot?"

"She is dead, miss—was dead ere I left the stage."

"Was she a friend of yours, then?"

"As near as ever friend could be—my wife," the blonde man replied, a trifle huskily. "You are the minister's daughter, I take it?"

"Yes, sir; my name is Nora Van Syckel. Yours is—"

"Blonde Bill, at your service."

The young woman nodded, and glanced hurriedly around her, as if fearful of being seen in the blonde man's company.

There chanced to be no one else upon the verandah at the time, and she seemed relieved.

"Come with me into the hotel?" she asked. "I would speak with you in private, if you have no objection to listening to me."

She then led the way up the broad staircase to a private parlour upon the

first floor, Blonde Bill following her, and accepting the seat she offered him.

"It won't take me long to tell you what I want of you," she said, as she swept to and fro over the carpet. "I have taken it upon myself, as my duty, to warn you that you are a marked man in this town, and that the sooner you take your leave the safer it will be for you."

"What do you mean? Why am I marked, and a total stranger in the town at that?" the blonde man cried, in surprise.

"I cannot tell you that, sir—no more than that there exists throughout the mining districts of San Juan county a bold and lawless gang of ruffians, who style themselves the Silent Tongues, and who rule these towns, literally, for once they take a dislike to a man, he has to leave—if not of his own free will, by theirs! I overheard a conversation a little while ago which led me to believe that a plot was on foot to rid the town of your presence, and I took the liberty to bring you here, and put you on your guard."

"For which act of kindness on your part I am deeply grateful," Blonde Bill said, warmly. "One question I would ask you that you may be able to answer, who is the commander of these Silent Tongues?"

"That, sir, I do not know, except that he is called Captain Terrible, which, of course, is but a *nom de guerre* to screen another name."

"Undoubtedly. I will bear your warning in mind, and look out for the Silent Tongues. Already I owe them a debt of vengeance, which shall be paid in blood."

Then the blonde man arose to depart.

"I should be pleased to have you call again, sir, when papa is at home," Miss Van Syckel said, accompanying him to the door. "I am somewhat a stranger in these parts myself, having recently returned from school in the East, and, of course, have made but few eligible acquaintances, having taken no particular fancy to the rougher class of citizens."

"Perhaps I shall find it convenient to do so," Blonde Bill replied. "If you learn anything more concerning the Silent Tongues, that might concern me, I should be pleased if you would let me know, as I generally like to rake in all the points on the board, when practicable."

Then, with a smile, Blonde Bill bowed himself gallantly out of the presence of the minister's daughter, and betook himself to the street.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let us return to the street scene.

The bid of the Ohioan elicited a murmur



of surprise from the crowd, and seemed to please Salamander Sam greatly.

"Thar now, ye durned galoots, here's one pilgrim as ain't afeard ter bid on ther gal!" he roared. "Keep ther ball in motion now; keep 'er a-goin', I tell ye! A hundred dollars I've got—a hundred I'm offered fer the girl an' burro. Whar's ther pilgrim wot makes et two hundred—a hundred an' fifty—one an' a quarter? Going at a hundred; who makes et two?"

"I'll make it two hundred!" exclaimed a voice, and Rosebud Rob stepped forward.

"Two hundred I'm offered—two hundred!" shouted the ruffian. "Who sees me three?"

"Here," replied the portly Ohioan, eyeing the helpless girl with a gaze that caused her to shudder, so full of villainous significance was it.

"Three hundred—three I've got—four I want! Keep 'er b'ilin', gents!" cried the auctioneer. "She's a gud'un, is ther gal, 'cept she's inclined ter be a little sassy, an' arn't afeard ter carve a feller when her dander's up. Three I've got—who'll make it four?"

"I will," Rosebud Rob said, with as much coolness as though he were bidding for a gold-mine instead of a lovely girl.

"I'll make it five, then," the Ohioan said, promptly, with a scowl at his opponent. "I'll have the girl, young man, at any price, so you may as well stop bidding."

"Maybe you'll get her, and again, maybe ye won't," the sport coolly replied. "It depends somewhat on which of us has the biggest pile! I'll see you fifty better on the last bid."

"Five-fifty I have—five-fifty, gents; who will make it six? Six! six! who'll make it six? Going at five hundred and fifty dollars; who'll make it six?"

"Hallo, heer; hallo, ye gol-durn mules! Git out o' ther way, an' make way fer ther great Dubble-j'inted, Patent Adjustable Death Committee o' ther Mines—ther reg'lar roarin' antediluvian disaster o' the Animas—the sky-scrapin' Centenyal Insurrective Investigation Board uv ther San Won! Heer we cum a-boomin', an' we do desire ter stick our paw in this yere puttickler pie. Cum erlong, Avalanche, ye gol-durned no-ear Annihilator, and let's take a peep at ther critter—cum erlong w' yer uncle, Beautiful Bill—ther world-renowned sweet-scented, saintly-tempered Apoller o' the West—the har-trunked, ivory-tusked Pet Elerfant o' ther Animas Trail; ther gigantic statter o' ther Goddess o' Liberty!"

And following the words came the big

man from Leadville, elbowing his way through the crowd, closely accompanied by the Annihilator.

"Going—going—going! Who makes et six? Where's the man as durst offer me six hundred dollars fer ther burro, w' ther gal throw'd in?" cried Salamander Sam.

"Harkee! Great ham-bone! ef they ain't sellin' a gal at auction!" exclaimed Avalanche. "Bill, thet ain't a squar' deal!"

"No, sir-ee! bob-tail horse—thet ain't no fair kinder shake," the giant cried, indignantly. "When wimmen cum ter be sold like sheep, I reckon et's high time fer ther Death Committee ter show a tooth er two, dog my mother-in-law's old Thomas cat, ef I don't!"

"Say, see heer, ye durned black-ha'ed, stoop-shouldered, lantern-jawed, slab-sided, disgustin' specimen o' humanity, d'ye see me? I'm Beautiful Bill, I am, an' this yere snoozer he be Old Avalanche, an' we two constutute ther Death Committee o' ther Mines. An' now, durn my cats, we, ther aforesaid Death Committee, want ter know wot bizness you've got makin' a auction hyar uv a gal?"

"Et's my gal, an' ef I wanter sell 'er, I'm goin' to do et!" savagely replied Salamander Sam. "This ain't none o' yer funeral, old man, an' ef ye don't want me ter make a tunnel through you, jest ye close yer valve. D'ye heer?"

"Do we heer?" the giant replied, with a leer; "on course we do, an' ef ye'll git down off'n thet burro, an' waltz over hyar ter my embrace, I'll hug ye ter death in less time 'n takes an Indian ter smell tarant'ler. Don't fret—right hyar will ther Death Committee wait until ye git ready ter purceed ter biz."

"Six hundred and fifty dollars!" cried Rosebud Rob, at this juncture.

"Seven hundred!" added the Ohioan, fiercely.

"Eight hundred," sang out the sport, who was now backed, or rather urged on, by Blonde Bill, who stood at his side.

"Nine hundred!" from the Ohioan, followed by a vindictive curse.

"A square thousand I'll make it!" the sport cried, coolly, while the situation momentarily grew more and more exciting.

Angrier and angrier, if possible, grew the Honourable Ray Vernon at the opposition offered by the sport, for he was determined to possess the girl, Dashing Dolly, and every raise offered by the sport meant so many more dollars out of his pockets.

"Come, gents, keep 'er a-goin'," shouted Salamander Sam, with a grin of satisfaction. "Et does me proud to see ye place



ther gal at sêch a high vallywation, fer she's cl'ar material, an' wth her weight in pure a'riferous, ter say nothin' about ther burro."

"Ten-fifty," bid the Ohioan.

"Eleven I mak'er," from the sport.

"Eleven-fifty I'll give!"

"Fifty better I'll see ye."

"Curse you, you vagabond, do you mean to run the girl up to a million?" the Congressman cried, fiercely.

"Perhaps, if I see fit," Rosebud returned. "You'll generally find me a man to suit all circumstances, an' I propose to see you a better, bid what you may."

An oath from Vernon was indicative of his feelings.

"There is no use of fooling," he said, savagely. "I'll have the girl in spite of you. I'll give five thousand dollars for the girl, cash down!"

"Well, then you put me under obligations to see you better," the sport said, with a smile. "I'll bid ten thousand dollars for her, and give her her freedom!"

A murmur of astonishment ran through the crowd, for this was the tallest bidding they had ever known.

"Ther feller wi' ther waxed moustache is a brick, durn my old mule's left hind fut ef he ain't!" declared Beautiful Bill, approvingly.

"Great ham-bone, yes," assented the Annihilator. "I've heerd o' him afore. But 'tain't his cash w'at's buyin' ther gal. Ther blonde galoot's his backer."

This was evident to all the spectators, for the blonde stranger occasionally nudged the sport to raise the bid.

"Well, my friend, are you through?" Rosebud Rob demanded, when the Ohioan did not raise the bid. "Can't you see ten thousand in the girl?"

"No, curse you, but I'll make this job cost you dearly before you're through with me."

"Cum, young feller, let's hev yer swag, an' ye can hev Dashing Dolly," Salamander Sam cried. "I'm anxious ter slope afore ther gal gits free."

"Hold on! afore ye slope, I've got er leetle ackount ter settle wi' you!" Beautiful Bill reminded, "an' we may as well settle right heer as ennywhar."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### DEADWOOD DICK PUTS IN AN APPEARANCE.

THE giant meant business, evidently, for right there in the centre of Silverton's main street, he stroved off his jacket, and

rolled up his sleeves upon a pair of monster arms, in a way that was very suggestive, to say the least.

A murmur of admiration escaped the spectators at the sight of the whip-like cords and heavy muscles upon the giant's limbs. Salamander Sam saw them, and scowled darkly, for, ruffian and bully though he was, he at once felt that he had met a man for whom he was no match.

"Jest luk at me, wull ye?" Beautiful Bill roared, prancing about in a very undignified series of positions. "Jest feast yer optics onter me, wull ye—me, ther famuss statter uv ther Goddess o' Liberty—ther father o' my kinty. D'ye see me, ye gol-durned slave-trader—d'ye see yer unkle gazin' at ye, wi' ther zest uv a hungry elerfant? Cum erlong to my hug, ef ye durst fight United States fashun, an' let me put a postage-stamp over yer eye, so't'll let ye pass as third-class matter! Cum an' hug me once, if you dare—if ye dare, ye black-whiskered son uv a bufler!"

"It is useless to waste your breath on him," Dashing Dolly cried, addressing the giant. "He is a bigger coward at heart than a coyote, and there's no fight in him."

"You lie, cuss ye!" Salamander Sam cried, fiercely. "Thar's no man as walks wot I am afeard of."

"Then, fer ther luv of Heaving, jest cum an' see yer unkle!" implored the giant. "Cum an' harpoon ther great ivory-tusked pet elerfant, or offer me a stale chaw uv terbaccar! Whoop-ee! sail in, ef ye wanter l'arn how ter skin a catamount in two single seconts."

But Salamander Sam made no move to respond, and, seizing the package of bills handed him by Blonde Bill, he jabbed the spurs into his animal's side, and shot away down the street like the wind.

"Gol-durn my old mule's left hind fut!" blustered the giant. "Ef I was good fer shucks on hossback, I'd foller thet galoot, an' dust his jacket, I would. But et ain't no use o' chasin' chain lightnin' on fut. Whar's ther feller wot owns ther gal?"

"Here is the man," Rosebud Rob said, indicating the blonde stranger who stood by his side. "I was only the bidder—he was the backer, and consequently owns his purchase."

"You mistake my motives, sport," Blonde Bill said, stepping forward. "I take pleasure in presenting the young lady with her liberty. It was for that purpose I backed your bids."

A murmur of applause escaped the lips of the spectators, and Dashing Dolly gazed at the blonde man, tears springing to her eyes.



"I am sorry I have only the grateful thanks of a friendless waif to offer you," she said, modestly. "I—I——"

"Do not consider yourself under the least obligation to me," Blonde Bill replied. "It was simply to prevent your falling into villainous hands that I interfered, and it was no more than any man would have done!"

"Then, sir, you mean to infer that I had villainous motives in bidding for the girl?" the Ohioan sharply demanded, striding up before the blonde man.

"I do, sir," was the cool response. "The way you gazed at her was sufficient guarantee of your base designs had you got her in your power."

"You lie, sir—you lie like a Ute!" the Congressman cried, furiously, and he raised his clenched hand threateningly.

But if it was his intention to strike the blonde man, his plan was frustrated, for he suddenly found his wrist caught in a vice-like grip in the powerful hand of the Leadville giant.

"See hyar, no ye don't, my gay rooster!" the Pet Elephant cried, with a chuckle. "Goin' ter punch ther blonde pilgrim, was ye? But got fooled, didn't ye, jest like ther Chinaman wot tried ter pick a silver outer my old mule's fut! an' gol-durn my mother-in-law's pet Thomas cat ef ye ain't got ter git down on yer knees an' apologize ter my cinnamon ha'ed namesake, or I'll make a cadaver outer you quicker'n a lightnin'-bug ever got skeart at thunder!"

"Don't bother the man on my account, pard," Blonde Bill said, turning away. "He'll never harm anybody."

Beautiful Bill reluctantly let go his hold on the Ohioan's arm, seeming to regard the blonde man's will as his law. "Ye may thank yer boots ye git off so cheap," he muttered. "Next time ther Death Committee will tend ter yer case."

The Ohioan speedily decamped, and as Bill had gone the crowd began to disperse.

As Dashing Dolly still remained bound to her burro, Rosebud Rob now stepped forward and cut her bonds, and then assisted her to dismount.

"Have you any friends or acquaintances here to whom I could conduct you?" he asked.

"None," was the reply. "I have not a friend in the world."

"Say not so, young lady. Two at least will act as your friends with your permission—Blonde Bill and myself."

"I thank you, sir, but I could not think of accepting the hospitality of two utter strangers. If you will show me a good hotel, I will see if I cannot get employment

there as waitress. I think by trying I might be able."

Accordingly Rosebud Rob accompanied her to the "Leviathan," and introduced her to the proprietor. He then stepped aside, and waited until he got an opportunity to speak with the gentleman himself, whose name was Colonel Arthur.

"Did you hire the young lady?" he asked, intercepting the colonel.

"Well, no, not exactly," was the surprised reply. "I sent her to the parlour to await my answer."

"You take her—give her some light and desirable employment; I'll settle the bill," the sport said.

"You?" the colonel demanded.

"Exactly. I've plenty of cash, and it won't hurt me to look after the friendless. If you want a recommend go ask Blonde Bill, if Rosebud Rob is not all right."

"Oh, yes, I see. You're the blonde man's friend, eh? Well, that's all the recommendation I need. The young lady shall be properly cared for."

"Thanks. If a man who calls himself the Honourable Ray Vernon, offers to molest her, kick him out at my expense."

"I'll see to it, sir," the colonel replied, turning away. "The self-styled Congressman is no particular favourite of mine."

\* \* \* \* \*

About the same hour that evening, when Blonde Bill was closeted with Nora Van Syckel, the Honourable Ray Vernon, of Ohio, entered a notorious gambling palace, not far from the "Leviathan."

The saloon, which was known as the "Monaco," was filled with miners, citizens, and gamblers, when the Ohioan entered, but he crowded his way along until he chanced to find a vacant chair and table.

He at once ordered a bottle of wine, and proceeded to do justice to it, while he smoked a cigar, and gazed upon the strangely exciting scene around him.

He had not been seated more than half an hour, when a man entered, and approached the vacant seat opposite the Congressman.

He was a burly individual, clad in mud-splashed garments of coarse material, and his face, what was not hidden beneath an immense bushy red beard, was shaded by the broad rim of a slouch hat. The butts of a pair of heavy cavalry pistols peeped out of the tops of his knee-boots, and a pair of Colt's trusty revolvers were thrust into the belt about his waist.

Without invitation he took the vacant chair, and gazed at the Ohioan for several minutes in a rude stare.



"You are Ray Vernon, ain't ye?" he finally demanded.

"That is my name," the Congressman replied, coldly.

"Tho't so," was the reply. "You're ther feller wot claims ter hev bought out ther mines below heer, I reckon?"

"I am supposed to be the owner of the Deadwood Dick's Discovery Mines," the other assented. "Why do you ask?"

"Because of yure ther chap, ye've undertook a bad job. Deadwood Dick didn't sell you the mines."

"He didn't?"

"No, sir-ee! You met him up in Leadville, and made him an offer which he declined. Then you asked to see ther deed to ther claim. He show'd thet to ye, an' ye examined it. While puttendin' ter reflect you asked him ter drink, an' ordered a bottle o' wine and glasses. When ther wine came Deadwood Dick refused ter drink wine, and you asked him ef he wouldn't exchange ther wine fersars'prilla. This he consented to do, an' while he was gone, you dropped a sleeping potion inter his glass. When the drink came you hastily filled his glass, an' he didn't notice the powder when he drank it. In five minnits he war asleep, an' you made off wi' ther deed o' ther Discovery claim."

The Ohioan uttered an impatient oath.

"How do you know this?" he demanded.

"I know it," the stranger replied, "because—because I am Deadwood Dick, and have come for that deed!"

And as he spoke, he made a quick motion towards his feet, and the next instant held a pair of cocked revolvers in hand.

Gold-mounted tools they were, of great beauty, and their deadly muzzles stared the Ohioan in the face.

"Curse you!" he gasped, growing white in an instant. "Put aside your weapons. What do you mean?"

"I mean business," the ex-outlaw said, with fierce resolve; "I don't generally mean anything else, when I grip such tools as these. You can give me back the deed to Deadwood Dick's Discovery, or I shall be forced to shet up yer shop at once."

"I haven't got the deed—I didn't take it," was the parleying reply.

"You lie!" Dick replied, coolly; "you stole it, and I demand it, or your life!"

"Put up your weapons first, then."

"Oh, no. You can't come that. The 'boys' won't harm you, if you dish over the deed in right good grace."

"What if I won't do it?"

"Then that will make it necessary for crape to be hung on your door."

"The deed is at my hotel. You will have to come there for it," the Ohioan said.

"Very well. Rise and move towards the deer, and I will follow you. Make one treacherous move, and I'll put an air-hole through you on time. Remember who is behind you!"

Vernon arose with a scowl, and pushed his way towards the door through the crowd.

Close at his heels followed Deadwood Dick, in his clever disguise, and the formidable pair of revolvers he held in his hands were an incentive that caused the crowd involuntarily to make way for him.

Out into the crowded main street of the little mountain town they went, the ex-outlaw now thrusting his weapons into his jacket pockets out of sight, but in such a way that he could fire at the Ohioan as well as before.

Down the street they went, towards the "Leviathan" hotel, without anyone knowing their peculiar relations to each other.

The Ohioan was in a rage at himself for thus being forced to obey the will of the outlaw, but he had heard so many stories of the dare-devil Deadwood Dick, that he was fearful of the consequences of disobeying.

At last they reached the "Leviathan," and ascended the steps to the verandah; then, watching his chance, the Ohioan made a sudden dive through a side door, as they entered the broad hallway, and, raising his voice, shouted:

"Help! help! Stop the red-whiskered villain, for he is the accursed outlaw Deadwood Dick!"

## CHAPTER V.

### CALAMITY AND AVALANCHE.

THE cry of the Ohioan rang loudly through the hall and bar-room of the hotel, as he rushed through the latter, and ensconced himself in a closet used for storing liquors.

Those who had occupied the bar-room at the moment of his entrance, drew their revolvers, apprehensively for enough of the name and notoriety of Deadwood Dick had they heard to know that revolvers were necessary when he came.

But though they stood with bated breath, the famous ex-outlaw did not appear as expected.

A hasty search was made of the lower part of the hotel, and in the street, but no person with red whiskers could be found.

Learning this, Ohio's Congressman, the Honourable Ray Vernon, emerged from his



temporary place of refuge, and proceeded first of all to gargle his throat with hot Scotch at the bar to steady his nerves.

"Kinder skeart, weren't ye?" a miner asked, when he found himself able once more to walk about bravely. "Hain't much used ter havin' outlaws a-taggin' at yer heels, I reckon?"

"No, curse the fellow. He had me covered by a pair of six-shooters, and I had to dodge lively to get out of his reach," the Ohioan replied, with a scowl. "Which way did he go—how did he escape?"

"Thet 'pears ter be somethin' nobody don't know how ter ans'er," the miner replied. "But here's Calamity Jane! Mebbe she could tell ye."

The Congressman turned his gaze sharply upon the famous girl dare-devil of the mines, who had just sauntered into the bar-room—the same smartly attired party whom Blonde Bill, not a great while before had seen going down the street. She was the same imperturbable character, whom it has been our privilege to introduce heretofore, only if anything growing handsomer in feature and form, consequent upon her ever moving life and excitement in a wild country.

"You say that person is a woman?" Vernon demanded, of the miner.

"On course she is," was the reply. "That's Calamity Jane, ther gal wot ain't afeard o' no man thet ever rode a mule—no sir-ee, not she! Knowed her up in Deadwood an' Leadville."

"And you say she is a friend of Deadwood Dick, the outlaw?"

"Waal, I reckon; leastways she used to be. They do tell me thet she'd hev 'im in a minnit, ef he'd hev her."

"Humph!" the Ohioan said, eyeing the girl dare-devil with a sharp scrutiny. "I'd like to know her. Introduce me."

"No, sir-ee!" the miner declared, promptly. "Ter interdooce a stranger ter a gal, out in this land, means ther vouch for his bein' all squar', an' I ain't on ther vouch to-night, especially w'en Calamity Jane is around, an' her pistol-arm 'pears ter be in good workin' order. Thar's Blonde Bill, stranger—mebbe c'd tell ye which way Deadwood Dick went, ef ye're so anxious ter foller him."

"I do not care to receive information from that man," the Ohioan snarled, flashing a glance at the handsome blonde man, who had just sauntered into the great bar-room. "He is a liar, a rascal, and a meddlesome villain!"

"Bet a cookie ye dursn't tell 'im thet ter his face," the miner muttered, as Vernon turned away.

He followed the girl sport, Calamity Jane, until he found an opportunity to excuse himself in her presence, for his temerity in addressing her, with the gallantry of a polished man of the world.

"You will please excuse me," he said, "but on learning that you were a friend of the ex-outlaw, Deadwood Dick, I could not refrain from addressing you, and begging permission to ask you a few questions!"

The girl gazed at him keenly, through her steady, dusky orbs, as if making a rapid analysis of the man.

"Well, go ahead," she said, calmly. "If ye propound ennything I feel like answerin', most likely ye'll heer from me, and ef ye don't, I'm as mum as a clam in his shell."

"Very well. They tell me you once wanted to wed this Deadwood Dick, but he wouldn't have you. It was a bitter insult to as pretty a girl as you. Has not there risen in your heart a revengeful spirit against this outlaw—would you not like to get square with him, on the old score, if you were paid well for it?"

The Ohioan bent towards her, his eyes gleaming like those of a tiger about to spring upon its prey. It was easy to see that he meant business—that for Deadwood Dick he cherished a deadly hatred.

Calamity Jane gazed at him for a moment, as if in great surprise; then a wild laugh burst from her lips.

"You consummate villainous puppy!" she said, jerking a revolver from her belt. "I've ten kinds of a notion to blow the hull roof of yer skull off, fer yer audacity. Begone, sir, before I get nervous and pull the trigger!"

"But hold! you must hear me through. I will pay you well to put this Deadwood Dick out of my way—a thousand dollars—two thousand, even!"

"Bah! a hundred thousand would not hire Calamity Jane to strike a true and tried friend!" the girl replied, scornfully. "You mistake me, sir villain. I am no tool or hireling to be tempted by a paltry offer of gold. Go, sir, before I make a bullet hole in yer head. I'm famous at it, once I am riled."

The Honourable Ray Vernon slunk away, with a vindictive curse. He had calculated that he could make the girl dare-devil a valuable accessory to his schemes. But how signally he had failed!

After he had taken his leave, Calamity Jane left the bar-room, and ascended the stairs to her room, and entering it, she locked the door behind her, and seated herself at a window overlooking the busy main street of the town.



"Deadwood Dick is down in this district," she murmured, watching the many moving figures in the moonlit street below, "and he is again in danger. Noble Dick! no braver man ever roamed through this wild country—yet, the people ~~are~~ turned against him, because of his early record. Ha! ha! why do they not trample on me, because a fiend in man's attire once crushed every true womanly instinct out of my heart—because one man ruined my life, with the hope of watching me go headlong down the road to destruction! But he failed—thank Heaven for that! The one fatal step taken, I had courage to refuse the next. But, bah! why recur to the past. Though I were a saint, I am still Calamity Jane. No one cares for me. They call me heartless, unfeeling. Perhaps I am. Were I friendly to the world, my name would be even worse than it is. Yet, I have a heart—a taste—a craving for a different life than this. Knowledge of manners, education, intellect—all are mine, yet I cannot grasp them, because—I have nothing to live for—no one to encourage me—because, I am Calamity Jane. Alone—fatherless, motherless—friendless. Oh! Dick! Dick!"

Her voice grew choked, she buried her face in her hands, and her form quivered with the emotion that filled her being.

"Calamity!"

She started violently, and raised her head quickly, a wild, eager hope coming from her glistening eyes.

A man stood before her—not Deadwood Dick, as she had expected on hearing her name spoken—not the famous ex-outlaw, but one whom the dare-devil girl recognised, for all that—Old Avalanche.

"Avalanche! can it be true that this is you?" the girl cried, springing forward to grasp his horny hand. "I should sooner have expected to see Old Nick. What has brought you down here?"

"Great ham-bone, O'lamity, what ked hev ever fetched me, 'cept ter help ther b'ye, Deadwood Dick. I heerd as how they war mistreatin' him, down hyer, an' so I jined wi' Bill, an' we rid down on a terrific zephyr o' demolition, to lend a helpin' hand."

"Have you seen Deadwood Dick?"

"No, but I hev heard from him. He sw'ars he'll make it lively hereabouts ef they don't let him alone."

"Which I honour him for. They tell me the roughs from here drove him off of his Discovery, down the Animas."

"Yas, so they did. He discovered gold ther first, about a month ago, staked out his claim, an' got it recorded. So, ye see, et's his, fair shake. But the roughs war too

much fer him, an' he had ter pull out. But, gal, ye've not told me what ye was callin' Dick fer, an' a-feelin' bad, like a cattamount w'at had lost his tail in a b'ar-trap? Hain't ye grown out o' thet hankerin' arter Deadwood Dick yet, arter ye lived ter see him so much married?"

A strange flush came slowly to her cheeks and forehead, and she flashed him a glance unutterable.

"No," she said, frankly, after a moment's hesitation, "I will not lie to you, who have ever been kind to me. The love I bear for Deadwood Dick sprang to existence during our first meetings, up in the Hills; and instead of lessening, it has increased. Were he a thousand times wedded, it would not lessen it or make me jealous. Why, you ask? Because I know he does not love—because he is innocent of all knowledge of my blind devotion. I tell you this, Avalanche, because you have asked me. I feel safe in doing so, relying on your secrecy."

"Kerect, gal, kerect! I'm glad ye still hankers arter ther boy, an' hope my old years may be spared long enuff 'til I kin see you two jined. Mebbe et won't be so, fer he's got a purty little woman now; but life is mighty onsartin. So, ye won't be wicked ef ye hope, yet."

"Less wicked than wise, I guess," she said, with a sudden-wrought lightness. "Who are the two strangers—Rosebud Rob and Blonde Bill?"

"Dunno much about ther blonde pilgrim, by ther great ham-bone. He be er sorter enigma, be thet galoot—sort o' king o' ther mines, fer et is reported he kerries more wealth about his toes nor Creesus. Ther t'other chap he be Rosebud Rob—a cuss on wheels, once ye set him a-goin', I've heerd say."

Suddenly from the street below arose the sounds of a great hubbub—as of many voices and hurrying feet.

"Great ham-bone thet paralysed old Joner, w'at's up, now?" the Annihilator demanded, excitedly. "Thar's some circus afoot, I'll bet a plug o' terbaccor. Cum! let's go down, an' see what's ther rip?"

They accordingly hastened from the room, and down the stairs to the verandah of the "Leviathan."

Below, in the street, hundreds of people were collected in the bright moonlight, forming a circle round two persons who stood facing each other in an antagonistic attitude.

One of them was the ruffian, Salamander Sam, and the other the Leadville giant Beautiful Bill.

"Cum! ye gol-durned Rocky Mountain



tarant'ler—ye or'nary sweet-scented polecat! ef ye've got er single spark o' vitality or manliness erbout ye, squar' yerself, an' waltz right up! Don't ye see I'm waitin' wi' all the lamb-like docility an' patience uv old Job's gobbler?" the giant roared, dancing about, as if he were upon nettles.

"I ain't agoin' ter fight," the Salamander replied, with an oath. "You're a bigger man than I, an' I ain't anxious ter get knocked outer time."

"Ba-a-a!" roared the giant, who had evidently been indulging to some extent. "Ye don't mean ter tell me that ye aire actooally afeard o' me ther Sarytoga-trunked, ivory tusked Apoller o' ther Nor-west—ther sweet-scented Pet Elerfant o' ther Leadville trail—ther statteresek Pride o' ther Animas?"

"I have said that I wouldn't fight you," Salamander Sam replied, suddenly. "You are a giant, and I am not. Put up some other pilgrim, and I'll fight, an' show ye how to fill a coffin in first-class style."

"Kerwhoop! that's ther tork," the giant cried, pausing to glare around him. "Whar's ther pilgrim o' pigminyan size as durst step for'a'd an' thrash ther conceit out o' ther feller wot auctioned off ther gal, this afternoon? I've hunted him up—I, Beautiful Bill, ther Pet Elerfant—an' a hundred dollars hev I right heer in my breeches pocket fer ther galoot as kin lick Salamander Sam. Who'll take ther offer, now—whar's the man?"

"Here!" a voice exclaimed, and to the surprise of all, forward into the ring stepped the new king of the mines, Blonde Bill!

## CHAPTER VI.

### A STREET FIGHT AND AN ACCUSATION.

A MURMUR of surprise ran through the crowd, as the blonde man stepped forward into the ring.

Somehow, in the short time he had been in the little mining town, the report had got abroad that he was a sort of financial king, and that he, with all his prepossessing elegance of manner and dress, should desire to participate in a street fight, was past the understanding of the average Silver-tonian.

Salamander Sam had thrown off his coat, vest, and shirt, and stood stripped to the waist. His form as thus revealed was sinewy and muscular.

Blonde Bill stood with arms folded across his breast, watching the stripping of his adversary, with a strangely peculiar smile lurking beneath his blonde moustache. As

yet he had made no preparations at all for the fight.

"Cum ye cinnamon cuss," Beautiful Bill cried, as he noted his man standing so calm and unconcerned. "Ye wanten be pullin' off yer togs, ef ye expect ter lick ther black-haired galoot. Beautiful Bill, am I—ther great Sarytoga-trunked, ivory-tusked Pet Elerfant o' ther Animas Trail—the sweet-scented Apoller o' ther Nor-west, and I do asseverate an' declare that ther Salamander hes muscles like er buffaler bull."

"I have no preparations to make," Blonde Bill replied, indifferently. "When the ruffian is ready, I am."

"D'ye mean ter call me a ruffian?" Salamander Sam demanded, savagely. "I'll pound ther daylights clean outen ye fer that."

"It is your privilege to do so, ef ye git ther chance," Blonde Bill replied, again, apparently not the least troubled by his opponent's threat. "When you are ready, sing out. How do you want it—by rule, or 'do as you please'?"

"Do as ye durn please, on course," Salamander Sam replied, an evil glare in his eyes, for right glad was he to have the chance of a choice. "Do as you please," or rough-and-tumble fighting, as sometimes practised in the mines, gives a person the chance to bite, kick, scratch, knock or gouge, without any conformity to the general rules of pugilism, and is certainly the most effective and brutal manner of using a man up, without mercy.

A growl of dissent ran through the crowd as the ruffian eagerly accepted the brutal mode of fighting, for he had a wide reputation of being the champion of that particular field, and very few there were among the assembled spectators who would have liked to see the blonde stranger clawed to death by the wolfish ruffian.

But Blonde Bill did not appear to be particularly concerned, as he stood calmly awaiting his adversary's onslaught. Faster came the people, and denser grew the crowd in Silver-ton's little main street, but Beautiful Bill patrolled the outskirts of the ring with frowning mien, and kept back the spectators by having a huge pair of four-shooters in his grasp.

"Git back! git back!" he yelled, "ef ye doan't want to git snagged inter purgatory on er streak o' greased lightnin'. Ther sarcus is about ter begin—ther performers aire now on ther sawdust, and ther old Pet Elerfant aire a-waitzin' around the trail. Keep back, ef ye doan't won't ter explode!"

Involuntarily the crowd surged back to a respectful distance, for they were rather chary of this big overgrown individual from



Leadville, whose aspect was anything but saintly, to say the least.

Salamander Sam was now ready, and moved stealthily towards the centre of the ring, his eyes expressive of a venomous purpose.

Blonde Bill also moved forward to meet him, with his arms still folded upon his breast, and a faint smile lurking about his lips.

When within a couple of yards of each other, both men paused—paused, and gazed at each other. The one evilly, fiercely, malignantly; the other steadily—deadly.

The next instant the Coloradoan launched himself forward, directly at his antagonist, with doubled fists, and mouth open, as if he were bent upon the instant annihilation of his victim. Not an inch stirred the blonde man from his tracks, but suddenly stretching out his arm, he knocked the attacker back to the ground, without any apparent effort.

Down went Salamander Sam, like a log, and lay quivering where he had fallen, while a cheer of applause rose from the crowd, and the Pet Elephant of the Leadville Trail danced about in the hugest kind of delight.

"The blonde man's a clipper." Calamity Jane said, enthusiastically, as, with Rosebud Rob and Avalanche, she watched from the verandah. "I'll bet high on him, after stein' him plant that one blow. Ah! Salamander Sam is crawling to his feet, after another dose."

It was even so. The ruffian had regained his feet, and stood a few feet from Blonde Bill, his eyes glaring more like those of a wild beast than those of a human being.

"Curse ye!" he hissed, fiercely, "what did ye hit me with?"

"Wi' his patent, cast-iron post-malls, on course!" Beautiful Bill replied, with a grin. "Oh! he's a' hoss, is that blonde cuss, an' I ken't plant a better crop o' knuckles myself."

"Come, you overgrown booby, get to business, if you want another instalment," Blonde Bill commanded, peremptorily. "I am anxious to get through with you, and go about my business."

This caused a titter among the spectators, and more enraged the ruffian.

"I'll finish ye, this time," he snarled, fiercely, and the next instant he took a flying leap forward, that brought him directly in front of the blonde man. In a moment more the two had clinched tightly.

It was now to be a contest of strength, rather than science, and the attention of the spectators became greater.

The Coloradoan was a man of great

muscular strength, and it would seem that he had a decided advantage over his opponent, but such was not the case, for although he tried the squeezing hug upon the blonde man, with the hope of crushing him, he soon found that his adversary knew a trick or two about the little game himself.

Like the powerful jaws of a vice did the arms of Blonde Bill wind round the Coloradoan, and tighter and stronger became his hug until the eyes of the black-haired pilgrim began to bulge from their sockets, and he grew purple in the face.

"Rocky Mountains polecat, an' perary coyotes!" ejaculated the giant, as he waltzed about the ring, nearly beside himself with enthusiasm. "Tork about bein' hugged ter de'th by yer mother-in-law, pards—et ain't no sarcumstance ter ther present case, no, sir-ee, bobtail hoss! Jest luk at that aire blonde cuss, will ye?—ain't he whoopin' her up ter ther black b'ar, famus? Bet my boots he's half-brother to a reg'lar high pressure engine, wi' forty hoss power. See how he makes the Salamander blush around ther gills, will ye—oh! lordy, et's better nor a circus."

Round and round staggered the locked enemies, both powerless to escape each other's hug, and each using his master efforts to crush the life out of the other.

The blonde man was the coolest, and apparently least affected. If the savage hug of the Coloradoan hurt him, the fact was not perceptible upon his smiling face; while on the contrary Salamander Sam's face was purple, his eyes bulged nearly out, and his tongue was hanging from his mouth.

"When you get enough, let me know, and I'll loosen," Blonde Bill said, as he noticed his adversary's condition.

"Never, curse ye!" was the gasping reply. "I'll die first!"

At this instant a change came. A pistol-shot was heard, and Blonde Bill suddenly dropped one arm to his side, with an exclamation, while Salamander also released his hold, and fell to the ground.

"I've been shot," Blonde Bill said, "and so has my opponent. Who committed this act? Show me the man and with my uninjured right arm, I will fight him!"

In an instant all was confusion, and hasty search and inquiries followed, but without satisfactory result.

No one seemed to know or have the least idea who had fired the shot which had barked the blonde man's wrist, and entered his opponent's back.

Whoever had fired the shot had been at some distance from the crowd, probably, as the report had not been loud.



The man, Salamander, bled like a stuck hog, and an examination proved that he could not be other than mortally wounded, for the bullet had entered his back and penetrated the left lung.

Two of the miners carried the wounded man away, and the crowd began to disperse, when they were, to some extent, prevented from leaving, as the Honourable Ray Vernon, of Ohio, stepped forward, and said:

"Excuse me, gents, for detaining you, it will be to your advantage to give me a moment's attention. I have discovered who it was that shot the blonde man and the ruffian."

"Oh! ye have, eh? Then y're the percise chap we want ter see," Beautiful Bill declared. "Tell us who promulgated ther deadly pill, an' durn my mother-in-law's little yaller dorg ef I won't impanel ther great Death Committee, an' set it ter work. Beautiful Bill am I, and I kin lick ther teetotal spots off'n ther cuss who salivated ther blonde, an' pasted ther stripes o' glory on the Salamander."

"The man who fired the cowardly shot is present," the Congressman went on. "As I understand your laws of honour, here in the mines, gentlemen, the man who does a mean act in a sly or treacherous manner is considered dishonourable, and deserving of being lynched. Is this not correct?"

"Kerrect!" cried the giant, with a flourish, and his sentiment was echoed by nods from the others.

"Then I propose you string up the man, Blonde Bill," the Ohioan decided, "for he is the guilty man who fired the shot!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### A BAD LOOK-OUT FOR BLONDE BILL.

THE announcement of the Ohioan was received with a general murmur of surprise, and not a few of the spectators gave vent to dissenting murmurs, while the big man from Leadville jumped fully three feet from the ground, with a yell of derision.

"Git out hyer, ye durned galoot!" he ejaculated, ferociously prancing up to the Ohioan. "Ye don't wantter die a unnatural death, do ye? Waal, then, ye don't wantter cast insinywations ag'in my friend wi' ther yaller moustache. Beautiful Bill's my name, an' ef ye don't wantter be measured fer yer pine-box, ye'd better dry up yer vocabulary."

"I care not who you are, sir; I have a right to make a truthful assertion," the Congressman declared, firmly. "If you will listen, I'll explain to you. I was watching the contest very closely, at the

time of the shooting, and I saw a small pocket revolver slip down from the blonde man's coat-sleeve, in such a way that it came between his thumb and forefinger of his right hand, the muzzle being pointed at his antagonist's back over his—Blonde Bill's—left wrist. Before I could give the alarm, it was too late—the shot was fired, and with the dropping of the blonde man's arm to his side, the weapon disappeared."

The looks of surprise and doubt began to disappear from the faces of the crowd to be followed by expressions of interest and belief.

"This is a strange story you are telling, pard," a miner said, who chanced to be Silverton's deputy-sheriff, by name George Garwood. "We've all, as a people, tuk quite a notion to the blonde pilgrim, an' et's hard ter believe he's up to sech sly gum games as that."

"On cource et is!" decided the Leadville giant, in disgust. "Et's ther disgustinest kind o' a polecat lie, and durn my mother-in-law's little yaller dorg, ef I ken't lick ther or'nary cross-eyed, ring-nosed galoot wot preferred ther charge—"

"I do not know that you will take my testimony alone, gentlemen," the Ohioan continued, "and perhaps, again, it isn't any of my business to take up sides against the blonde, but I like to see things halfway fair. Perhaps there is someone in the crowd who saw the same as I, quick as was the action."

"Yes, there is another, who witnessed the foul deed," a voice replied, and out from the crowd stepped Silverton's ministerial man, the Reverend Lester Van Syckel. "Though it is my creed to be merciful, I will at no time screen crime, and I frankly acknowledge that I saw the blonde stranger's murderous act!"

"Then, by Heaven! it must be so, and the assassin shall not escape," Deputy Garwood cried. "It was a mean and unfair act, and if there are any here who want invitations to a lynch picnic, let 'em speak up brisk!"

"Here! here!" came the answer, by a hundred voices. "We're with ye."

And, headed by the Honourable Ray Vernon, the Reverend Van Syckel and the deputy, the crowd surged eagerly towards the hotel, upon the verandah of which Blonde Bill stood, in company with Rosebud Rob, Calamity Jane, and Old Avalanche.

He had crossed over the street, and engaged in conversation with the sport, immediately at the conclusion of the strange duel, before the Ohioan's charges. Therefore he had heard nothing of the charges made against him, being deeply engrossed



in conversation with Rosebud, Calamity, and the Annihilator, to whom he had been introduced—Rosebud having introduced his friends—nothing until the deputy-sheriff's hand rested on his shoulder, and the officer's voice exclaimed:

"Pard, you're my prisoner!"

"Oh! I am, eh?" the blonde man replied, somewhat surprised by the announcement. "How do you make that out?"

"Well, sir, I am the deputy-sheriff of this 'ere town o' Silverton, an' I hev orders frum ther people ter arrest ye fer killin' Salamander Sam!"

"What's this?—arrest me for killing the man? Why, my dear sir, you must be out of your mind! We were fired at by some unknown party while struggling with each other, and I came near getting the same dose the ruffian got. I have a bark here on my left wrist as a memento of the close call!"

"Yas, that's all well enough for you to say, but et don't pass muster, ye see, wi' this hyer court," Garwood announced, determinedly. "We've got two men who tell a different sort o' a story from yourn. They say a revolver dropped out of your sleeve, into your hand, went off an' then disappeared from sight again, the result being the wound in the Coloradoan's back, an' a kiss o' yer wrist, purposely intended, no doubt. Now, mebber this ain't so, but it luks likely, an' so I arrest ye fer trial, wi' ther prospect o' a lynch picnic!"

"This is an infamous plot against me—a scurvy lie. I did not kill the ruffian, nor did I have any hand in it!" the blonde man replied, with sudden fierceness. "Who are my accusers?"

"I am, for one," the Congressman said, stepping forward with a malignant smile of triumph upon his face. "I saw you do precisely as the deputy, here, has described."

"And, I too!" added the Reverend Van Syckel, with a sorrowful look. "I cannot allow myself to screen crime, and permit the wicked to go unpunished."

Blonde Bill was staggered when he saw the evidence offered, but he remained as calm as was his usual wont.

"Gentlemen, you are both infernal liars," he answered. "Your testimony is falsehood and slander—some scheme worthy of Satan's imps to harm me. Again I protest that I had nothing to do with the shooting."

"Sorry fer ye, pard, but yer word won't carry weight, I'm afeard," the deputy replied. "Two aces is allus better'n a lone jack, an' ye see how 'tis yerself."

"Thar's another way o' gettin' at the matter," a miner suggested. "Ef he did the shootin', as stated, no doubt he still

carries the weapon concealed in his coat-sleeve."

"Good idea!" the deputy accepted. "Pull off yer coat, prisoner!"

"Very well, I will do so," Blonde Bill said, obeying the order, "and you will find a small revolver suspended in the sleeve by a rubber elastic. It is loaded in every chamber, and you can easily see that it has not been fired, as I have had no occasion to use it."

A short search found the weapon, just as its owner had prophesied. It was a brand-new four-shooter, of small or vest pocket pattern, and being bright and polished in every part and fully loaded, had evidently never been used. A further search of the blonde man's person revealed no other weapons, except those he carried exposed to view, in his belt.

"Thar! now, ye see, don't ye, thet ther Ohio polecat was a-lyin'?" triumphantly cried Beautiful Bill, as he crowded forward. "Et's conclusive proof he's innercent!"

"On course he is!" exclaimed Calamity Jane, joined by similar exclamations from Avalanche and Rosebud Rob. "The blonde cuss didn't shoot the rough, no more'n I did."

But Blonde Bill had only his four friends to protest in his favour, the remainder of the excited crowd were grimly silent.

"The majority rules, gentlemen, and it is my duty to make the arrest," the deputy-sheriff, persisted. "Will you come with me, prisoner, or shall I have to use force?"

"I will not resist the law, sir!" Blonde Bill replied, as he put on his coat. "Lead ahead, and you have my word that I will follow."

"Your word is sufficient," the deputy replied. "Come along."

He turned, descended from the verandah, and up the street they went, the crowd parting on either side to give them passage. Close behind followed the sport, Rosebud Rob, and also Beautiful Bill, Calamity, and Old Avalanche, with the surging crowd bringing up the rear, the Congressman and the Reverend Van Syckel among them.

In a few minutes the large barn which served as a court-house and gaol was crammed to overflowing.

Blonde Bill stood in the prisoner's box—an empty feed box—while Garwood towered upon an imaginary judge's stand.

"Feller pilgrims," he said, after glancing over the crowd, "we are here for the purpose of trying a man for murder in the first degree. Mebbe sum o' ye ain't heerd ther testimony, so the first party of the prosecution will please be heard."

Ohio's representative accordingly rose



and stated what he knew, precisely as he had first done, when making the accusation.

He was then followed by the ministerial man, who confirmed his statement, with a few concisely chosen words.

"You see, feller-citizens," Garwood said, "the proof is conclusive. The blonde chap undoubtedly did the shooting, and he therefore is pronounced guilty. There is no use of impanelling a jury—the case can be decided without. All that is ter do is ter vote on et. All in favour o' seein' Blonde Bill hoisted, will confer a favour by saying 'ay!'"

"Ay! ay! ay!" came a hoarse, tumultuous shout of many voices.

"Contrary, 'no!'"

"No!" came the reply—but only a few voices uttered the cry.

"Et's decided, then," Garwood announced, "an' I, ther deputy-sheriff an' judge o' this hyer town o' Silverton, do sentence Blonde Bill to be hanged ter ther first convenient limb o' a tree, one hour hence. Clear ther court-room, an' allow ther prisoner a quiet chance ter cogitate over his prospects."

And so, out once more into the moonlight emerged these citizens of Silverton, and waited in groups in the immediate neighbourhood, for no thought of sleep was there, with the prospect of the soul-inspiring spectacle of seeing a man launched into eternity.

In the hurry of the exit from the building, Calamity Jane had somehow got separated from Old Avalanche and Rosebud Rob, but evidently purposely, for no sooner had she got out of the thickest of the crowd, than she sped off up the mountain-gulch trail with rapid steps.

Rude shanties and cabins were strewn along through the gulch, but she seemed scarcely to notice them, until she reached one, about half a mile from Silverton, with a man sitting upon the threshold of the doorway, and evidently enjoying the beautiful moonlight, as he smoked a grimy clay pipe.

A red-shirted, roughly-dressed fellow, with bushy bewhiskered face, and shrewd little eyes, and a form betokening muscle and sinew.

Before him the girl dare-devil came to a halt, her bosom heaving deeply, from her swift run.

"Raphael?" she said, questioningly

"By heavens! is it you, Calamity?"

And the man sprang to his feet, glad surprise beaming from his little eyes.

"Yes, 'tis I," was the hasty reply. "I am glad you know me. You promised me,

Raphael, when you served under Deadwood Dick's flag, that, did I ever need assistance, I might command you."

"In truth I did, Calamity. You were a faithful friend to our captain, Deadwood Dick, in those bygone days, up in the Black Hills, and that fact made me a friend to you. The chance has never come as yet, when I could deal you an assisting hand."

"Well, it has come, now. A man—an innocent man, mind you, is about to be hung, down there"—with a nod towards Silverton—"and it must not be. What is to be done?"

"Rescue him, if you say so."

"But the crowd's against him—and us. There's a full hand of 'em."

"I care not. Count the cabins up the gulch—there's twelve of 'em, and every cabin contains three or four boys who know me as a leader. Once they knew Deadwood Dick, in the same shape!"

"Can it be true? Then, if they'll volunteer, we're flush, yet. Get them together at once, and I'll lead you and them down through Silverton, in the way Dick used to do up in the hills."

The miner, Raphael, nodded, and drawing a silver whistle from his pocket, he blew a shrill blast that echoed and re-echoed in wild, piercing, detonating quavers through the valley gulch.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### JUDGE LYNCH DETHRONED.

IN the meantime, the crowd waited in the moonlit gulch, for the moment to arrive when Blonde Bill was to be a chief participant in a tight-rope performance. Eager were these Silvertonians, to watch the lynching process, so that they could get the "hang" of it, as some facetiously-inclined miner remarked.

Nor had they long to wait, for the minutes slipped quickly by, and the hour grew nearer and nearer.

At last the door of the barn swung open, and a wild yell arose, for it was known by that that the allotted time had expired.

The next instant the deputy-sheriff stepped out into the gulch, followed by four other men, between whom Blonde Bill marched as a prisoner.

As calm and composed as a statue was the man, not a trace of fear upon his face, nor a tremor in his form.

The nearest tree suitable for the purpose of Judge Lynch was some hundred yards up the gulch, and towards this the prisoner was led, followed by the crowd.

A stout lasso was made ready, as soon as



a position was reached beneath a strong, out-reaching branch, and while the noosed end was secured about Blonde Bill's neck, the other was tossed over the limb, and taken in charge by a half-dozen ready volunteers.

"Now, then, pardner, yer all hunk!" the deputy-sheriff said, surveying the prisoner with a patronising air. "All's required is a leetle muscle, to h'ist ye. So, before the ceremonies begin, w'ch'll be in five minutes, ef ye hev any confessions to make, or any prayers ter offer, ye'd better git down ter bizness, lively."

"I would like to speak a moment with Rosebud Rob, if you haven't any objections," Blonde Bill replied.

"Not in the least," Silverton's worthy deputy replied, accommodatingly. "Rosebud Rob, if he is present, will please come forward."

The handsome sport obeyed, as soon as he heard his name spoken. A moisture came into his eyes, as he beheld the blonde man, ready for a launch into eternity.

"By Heaven, Bill, I would that it were in my power to help you!" he said, huskily, "but the four of us ain't enough."

"Of course not," and there's no other way out of the difficulty than by hanging, though Heaven knows I didn't shoot the ruffian. Rosebud, have you any idea who I am?"

"No!" the sport replied—"except you are Blonde Bill."

"That is only a nom de guerre," the other replied. "I've got to stretch hemp, and I may as well do it under my real as under a fictitious name. I am Richard Edward Harris—better known as Deadwood Dick!"

Rosebud Rob gave vent to a sudden exclamation, which was in turn echoed by the crowd.

"Deadwood Dick—you?"

"Yes, I! as Blonde Bill I was enabled to return here, whence these accursed Silver-tonians drove me; therefore, the disguise," was the reply. "Where are Calamity and Avalanche?"

"I do not know. I have not seen them since we left the court-room."

"Well, it matters not. They would grieve to see me shuffle off, and it is better they should be spared the pain. You will do as well. I want you to promise me something."

"Anything, friend," the sport said, gravely.

"Good. I know you're true as steel. You have heard of the mines, Deadwood Dick's Discovery. Henceforth and for ever hereafter they are yours and Calamity's jointly. But, in order to get them, you must get the deed of them from that Ohio

scoundrel, and plant your flag on the claim. You are no outlaw; they will not dare to drive you off. Another thing; I want you to break up the outlaw gang that caused the death of my wife, Edith. You will not have a hard job. The leaders of that gang are, I truly believe, the same pair who caused my sentence to-night, and it was the minister's daughter who fired the shot that killed Salamander Sam."

"I'll carry out your wishes to the letter," the sport replied. "Is that all?"

"Yes. Go, now, and let the law take the vengeance she has so long been deprived of."

With tears dimming his eyes, Rosebud Rob turned away, and retraced his steps to the place where he had left the giant.

Even as he did so, the voice of the deputy-sheriff was heard:

"Time's up! He's oh! he!"

"Come!" Rosebud said to the giant, "let's get out of this. I don't care to witness the spectacle."

Nor did Beautiful Bill, for, with a yell, he turned and dashed down the street after the sport. Ruffian though he was, by nature born, and rude and uncouth as the wild mountainous country of which he was a denizen, it was possible that he still had a heart more capable of tender emotions than his every-day exterior would seem to betray.

A wild, reverberating yell, as they rushed down towards the "Leviathan," warned them that Deadwood Dick's feet had cleared the ground—that he was being launched into eternity.

But hark!

Not only do the yells of the crowd swell upon the night, but other yells rise far above them—fierce yells they are, accompanied by the sounds of rapid pistol-shots, and the thunder of horses' feet.

Then follow startled cries, and a perceptible breaking of the crowd; a mass of humanity comes rushing headlong down Silverton's main street, with howls and curses, as if Old Nick in person were after them.

"What in the blazes is the matter?" Rosebud Rob gasped, as he and Beautiful Bill reached the verandah of the "Leviathan" a few moments ahead of the crowd.

"Holy polecats! can't ye see?" the big man from Leadville cried, pointing up the street. "Outlaws! outlaws, sure's I'm ther Apoller o' ther West. Outlaws, by ther breath uv old Zackariher Zebulom, an' they've reaskied ther blonde cuss, too! Hip! yip! hurraher!" And loudly the giant's triumphant cheer rang out upon the night.

But, the rushing crowd paused not to learn from whence it came. Madly they



sped on, frantic with desire to escape the band of masked horsemen that had driven them away from Judge Lynch's tree.

But, they need not have fled in such confusion, for the outlaws halted at the tree, and proceeded to take the rope from the neck of Blonde Bill, who had been dropped to the ground at the fleeing of his executioners, unharmed.

But, his bonds were not cut, except those around his feet, and they were renewed, when he was lifted into the saddle.

Seeing this act, one of the party uttered an exclamation of surprise, but a revolver pressed against his temple by an outlaw by his side, had the effect of producing silence.

Blonde Bill was securely fastened into the saddle of an extra horse that had been brought with them, then the leading line was taken in charge by one of the rescuers, and the cavalcade dashed away over the back trail, with yells of victory.

On they went up the gulch, into the interior of the mountainous district—now branching off into cross ravines, gulches and canyons—on, on, the wild ride continued, until the light of another day flecked the crest of the horizon.

Then, to the great surprise of Blonde Bill they came to a halt upon a singular plateau in the side of the mountains due east from Silverton, and overlooking the San Juan valley, through which the turbulent Animas followed its tortuous course like a thread of silver.

Here a dismount was made by the outlaws; Blonde Bill was released from his saddle, and assisted to the ground.

His arms were kept bound, however, and he was carefully guarded by two of the masked strangers.

After all had dismounted the course was taken up through a narrow fissure that seemed to split the mountain in twain, and one by one the masked men, their prisoner and horses, disappeared within this yawning gap, as if entering into the very bowels of the earth.

Into what strange hands he had fallen or whither he was going, Blonde Bill had not the slightest idea.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the evening of the day after that on which the rescue had taken place, the Reverend Lester Van Syckel left the hotel, and walked up the street to the first corner, where he turned off, and made his way into that scattered and mountainous part of the town, which had not as yet been classified into streets.

A short walk brought him to a large board shanty, somewhat isolated from other

habitations and apparently unoccupied, and there were no signs of life about it, and the windows were closely boarded up.

On reaching the vicinity of the cabin or shanty, he paused, and gazed sharply around him, as if to assure himself that no one was watching him; then he clapped a mask over his face, and fastened it there, thus effectually disguising his identity.

He then advanced to the door of the shanty, and unlocked it. Opening the door he entered a large apartment, which was wrapped in darkness, and closed it behind him.

Fumbling around, he soon found a lamp, which he lit, and placed upon a mantel.

The apartment as revealed by the light, was furnished with a large round table in the centre of the room, surrounded by some two dozen chairs. Rude settees were also arranged round the sides and ends of the apartment, making a seating capacity for at least two score of people.

Taking a seat by the table, the disguised minister lit a cigar, and waited.

He had not been seated ten minutes when the door opened, and another masked man entered from the darkness of the night without.

"Ah! it's you, is it, Vernon?" the renegade minister said, with a nod. "I am glad you are punctual, for we have business to attend to to-night."

"Exactly," the other said. "It was a bad thing for us that Blonde Bill, who turns out to be Deadwood Dick, has escaped."

"Bad enough," the minister said, in a tone that spoke of anything but a sanctified spirit. "Have you seen any of the other members?"

"Yes, there are several in town."

The assertion proved correct, for more masked men began to drop into the shanty, one by one, until, in the course of an hour, over a score were assembled.

As no more came, after that, the minister arose, and glanced round at the crowd.

"My friends," he said, "I am glad to see so many of you present, because we have important business on hand, that concerns the future welfare of every member of the band of Silent Tongues. We have an enemy in this town, who is deadly against us, and his removal from our path is imperatively necessary. The man is he who was rescued last night, Blonde Bill—alias Deadwood Dick, the ex-outlaw!"

A deep murmur came from the crowd, showing that they knew, but had no love for, the Prince of Outlaws.

"Some of you may have heard," pursued Van Syckel, "that this same man came here



## CHAPTER IX.

## ROSEBUD ROB AS A DETECTIVE.

for the sole purpose of breaking up our band, as he has successfully done in other parts of the country. It is true, else I should not have ordered an attack upon the stage, in the San Juan, which resulted so disastrously for our party. I had learned that the fellow was bound hither, and I thought that we could secure the treasure without loss of life, and at the same time settle his hash."

"But the bullet intended for him took off his wife," the Hon. Ray Vernon said.

"Yes. I did not get a good chance at him."

"Deadwood Dick is safely caged at the headquarters, captain," one of the masked outlaws said, rising and bowing. "I just came from there."

"What! Deadwood Dick captured, and at the stronghold? How is this?—explain!" the renegade minister cried, excitedly.

"Et was ther Lieutenant Raphael who did it," the outlaw replied. "Ye see, Raphael, he used ter be one o' Deadwood Dick's fellers, an' Calamity Jane she knowed him. So when she heard that Blonde Bill was a-goin' ter be hanged in an hour, she off an' hunts up Raphael, an' asked him ter help her resky the chap frum bein' lynched, on account of old friendly scores. Raphael he knows his P's and Q's, an' so he jest gits sum o' ther boys tergether, an' sails in an' reskies ther blonde cuss, wi' Calamity Jane along, an' then totes both she an' ther blonde chap off ter headquarters, an' sends me ter let ye know!"

Van Syckel, alias Captain Terrible, the leader of the dreaded Silent Tongues, gave vent to an exclamation of joy.

"Things have worked well," he said, rubbing his hands together, gleefully. "Deadwood Dick in our power, we can soon dispose of him, and thereby rid the brotherhood of a dangerous enemy."

"Certainly; and with his death, the Discovery mines down on the Las Animas become undisputably ours," Ohio's professed Congressman said, with a triumphant chuckle. "You say the girl Calamity Jane, is also a captive, Rudof?"

"Yes, captain."

"I will turn her over to you, my brother," Van Syckel said, addressing the Ohioan. "I want no women upon my plate. But, come; we have been long enough in session. Take your departure as you came, singly, and cautiously, for should suspicion be aroused as to our meetings here, inquiry would follow, and it would not be healthy for us hereabouts."

Accordingly the Silent Tongues disbanded in about the same order they came.

ROSEBUD ROB, the sport, was one of the masked men who assembled within the council chamber of the Silent Tongues that night, all by merest chance.

He had been up to a gambling saloon, not far from the shanty, and was returning, when a masked man passed him, and entered the said cabin.

It at once struck him as strange, and being of an adventurous turn of mind, his curiosity was aroused; so he lingered in the vicinity to watch the proceedings.

Not long did he have to wait, before another masked man came along, and followed the example of the other by entering the shanty.

Thoroughly aroused by this time, Rosebud Rob, with his accustomed quickness resolved to enter the cabin, also.

It was not long ere another of the outlaws came stalking through the darkness to suddenly find himself confronted by the sport, and a revolver pressed close against his cheek, in the most suggestive manner.

"Sh!" Rosebud hissed; "not a word, if you don't want me to spile your beauty. I'm a dangerous man to rile, so you'd better be submissive. I want to go in there to-night, and you must lend me your uniform," and he nodded towards the shanty.

The masked outlaw gave vent to a growl, but did not attempt to reach for a weapon; he evidently knew better than to thus sign his own death-warrant.

"You'd better not try in there," he grunted, "ef ye don't want ter git yerself inter trouble."

"I'll take the chances," the sport replied, as, while he kept the fellow covered by the revolver in his left hand, he used the right to relieve him of his belt of weapons. "I never got in so tight a place yet that I couldn't get out. Now be so kind as to put your hands behind you, and keep them there while I secure them. Don't you try no gum games, neither, if you don't want me to bore for ile in your cheek, with a lead auger."

The man obeyed, with poor grace, and in two minutes Rosebud Rob had him safely handcuffed, with a pair of the law's patent bracelets, which he always carried with him.

He then tripped him to the ground, and tied his feet with his pistol belt, so that he was utterly helpless.

"What the deuce you going to do with me, anyhow?" the outlaw demanded, gruffly.

"Sh! not so loud, if you don't want me



to shut your throttle-valve. I am going to drag you out of hearing, somewhere, and let you rest, while I visit the shanty, yonder. But first, let me remove your mask, and take a peep at you. You may be some friend of mine, and I'd awfully hate to discommode a friend, you know."

And with a chuckle, the sport knelt beside his captive, and tore off the cloth mask which screened the upper portion of his face from view.

He gave an ejaculation of surprise the next instant.

"Garwood, the deputy-sheriff, as I live!" he gasped.

"Yes, Garwood the deputy-sheriff," the other growled, savagely. "Young feller, you're the only one in Silverton that knows this, an' I want you to keep my secret for me. How much do you want?"

"Nothing!" Rosebud Rob said, quietly. "I am no tool or slave to be bought for gold. Nor am I a fool to lose a good advantage. If you don't want your neck put where you put Blonde Bill's last night, you'll have to figure for me."

In vain the deputy-sheriff tried to bribe Rob with offers to put out of the way any of his enemies. The handsome sport only looked with disgust at an officer who would so betray his trust.

He therefore gagged his prisoner, and having dragged him into a clump of pines, assumed his mask and entered the shanty.

What he heard, is already known to the reader. After the session closed, he left, as soon as possible, and returned to the place where he had left the deputy-sheriff.

"Well, what are you going to do with me?" demanded that guilty individual, with an eagerness born, apparently, of the greatest fear. "Ye ain't a-goin' ter give me away, I hope."

"That depends, somewhat," the sport replied. "If ye tell me where the headquarters of the Silent Tongues outlaws are situated, I shall probably be more merciful than if you refuse to grant the information."

"Then ye needn't be merciful," Garwood said, with a scowl, "fer I can't tell ye that. Ye kin string me up, but I cannot—will not tell ye that."

"Then I'll liberate you," Rosebud said, cutting the bands about his feet, and relieving him of the handcuffs. "You dare not do me harm, if you value your public office, and if I conclude to use you, I'll hunt you up some other time. Go!"

"I will go," Garwood replied, "and I am no dog not to remember you. When I have had my revenge, we'll cry quits, if you're willing. Ha! ha!"

And the deputy took advantage of his liberty to stride away into the darkness, while the sport, with a fearless laugh, went back to the hotel and retired for the night.

Early in the morning he was abroad, and met Beautiful Bill upon the verandah.

"Waal, w'at's ther tap?" the giant demanded. "Heerd anything frum Deadwood Dick and Calamity?"

"Yes," and the sport related his adventures of the previous night.

The big man from Leadville whistled as he heard.

"Beats a red-hot novel all holler, by gum!" he said. "So they're in the power o' ther Silent Tongues, arter all?"

"Yes, and it must be our business to get them out," Rosebud Rob said. "But how, is the question. I do not know where the outlaws' rendezvous is situated."

"Nor I, by ther holy polecats! But yonder comes ther other branch o' ther great Continental De'th. Committee, an' mebbe he kin dig up ther trail. I do sw'ar an' asseverate thet Old Avalanche, ther Annihilator, kin root up ary trail thet ever mortal made."

And, as the giant ceased speaking, he slapped his hand heavily down upon the shoulder of the great scout, who had just come up.

"Take keer, Billee; not too heavy," the old veteran grunted. "My old j'int's won't stand as much jarrin' as they uster did, in ther days when ther Annihilation established ets great fame—great anti-carnivorous ham-bone, no!"

"On course they won't, Alva, ye old superannuated zephyr—on course they won't; an' thet's ther reason I teched ye so lightly," the giant replied, effusively. "But we're glad ye've cum, all ther same, fer we hev need o' ye, ye pursevee."

"Yes, we have that," Rosebud Rob coincided. "We want ye to hunt up the trail of the Silent Tongues, and find where their headquarters are."

"Reckon thet wouldn't be no slouch of a job," the veteran Annihilator replied. "They hang out sumwhere's about Clumsy Mountain, over yonder to'rd the Animas, 'ca'se I've seen sum o' ther anymiles grazin' in the neighbourhood."

"You know that Blonde Bill—alias Deadwood Dick—and Calamity Jane are in the power of these Silent Tongues?"

"Great antiquated ham-bone, no!"

"Well, they are, we have learned, and if we don't get 'em out, it looks purty likely thet they'll be made the principal cadavers of a couple of funerals."

And then the sport narrated to the old



'Annihilator what he had previously told Beautiful Bill.

When he had finished, a new fire of life and spirit came into the eyes of the scout.

"Great ham-bone thet gargled the throat of old Joner!" he ejaculated. "Et is as you say; ther by'ee an' ther gal must be got out o' ther deefikilty somehow. When d'ye want ter move?"

"Not just yet. I've got a little other bull-doing to do before I go. If you see anything of Van Syckel, the preacher, or the Ohioan, look out for 'em, for I half expect they're at the head of the band of outlaws."

"You bet your last dollar on my old mother-in-law's leetle yaller dorg we will!" the giant assured, tossing his hat through in under his leg into the air, and skilfully catching it on his head, like a clown. "On course we will, old last rosebud o' summer, ef we hev to destroy ther blamed constertushung uv the United States! Beautiful Bill am I, an' hyar's Old Avalanche Hogg, ther lop-eared poreker o' ther North, an' we two planets do' constertoot ther famous Death-Committee o' ther mines!"

Taking leave of them, Rosebud Rob re-entered the hotel, and placed himself in a position where he could see everybody that entered or left the place by the front entrance.

There he waited until he saw Van Syckel and the man from Ohio leave the hotel, and then, ascending to the renegade parson's apartments, and opening the door, he entered a plainly-furnished sitting-room, lighted by two windows.

Nora Van Syckel, the bogus clergyman's daughter, was seated by one of these windows, engaged in sewing, at the moment of the sport's abrupt entrance, but sprang to her feet with a little cry of alarm as she saw him.

"Sir!" she said, coldly, "to what am I indebted for this visit?"

"Excuse me, miss, but you are not indebted at all," Rosebud replied. "I never charge for professional visits, especially to ladies. I came to have a few words with you, and I trust, taking the welfare of the Reverend Lester Van Syckel into consideration, you will have due patience and becoming fortitude upon this occasion."

There was sarcasm in the sport's tones that caused Miss Van Syckel to crimson, and then grow pale.

"I don't understand what you mean," she said, with an effort to conceal, somewhat, the agitation she felt; "but I will listen to what you have to say. Be seated, please."

"On the contrary, I think you do quite

understand the import of my words," Rosebud Rob rejoined, accepting a chair, and becoming seated. "In the vernacular of the mines, I've come for the express purpose of 'talking turkey' to you. In the first place, I'd like to give you a question to answer. Whom did you intend that bullet for?—the ruffian, or Blonde Bill?"

The minister's daughter grew deadly pale at the question, but by a strenuous effort managed to keep her composure.

"I—I don't understand you yet," she faltered. "What bullet do you mean?"

"The one that shut off the wind of Salamander Sam, in the street-fight, the night before last," was the reply. "You needn't deny that you fired it, for such a denial would not avail you. You were seen to stand upon the balcony, or roof, over the verandah and do the shooting, and now the question is—which did you shoot at?"

"That is none of your business," was the reply. "If you think you can make me commit myself, sir, you are mistaken."

"No, I am not mistaken," Rosebud persisted. "You can either answer my questions, or I'll put you where Blonde Bill left off."

"Bah! you wouldn't dare!"

"Why not, pray?"

"Oh! for different reasons."

The young lady was beginning to manifest more assurance.

"Because your reverend sire chances to be the Captain Terrible of the band of the Silent Tongues, eh?" was the retort. "I assure you that would not hinder my purpose."

Miss Van Syckel paled again.

"Who are you?" she gasped, "that you know so much?"

"Rosebud Rob, at your service, miss—a man to suit all circumstances," was the answer.

Then there was a silence of several minutes, which was finally broken by the young woman.

"You seem to be positive that I fired the shot," she said; "and I do not know that there is any use in beating about the bush, nor am I afraid to name who the bullet was intended for. It hit the party at whom it was aimed, in the back."

"Ah! then it was not for Blonde Bill?"

"It was not."

"Well, that's one point in your favour. Why, may I ask, did you shoot the rough?"

"Because I had taken a fancy to the blonde gentleman, and thought the ruffian was going to be too much for him."

"You needn't have feared that," Rosebud commented, with a low laugh. "I



opine it takes a man to hug Deadwood Dick to death."

"What! was Blonde Bill the famous Deadwood Dick?"

"He was."

"Well, that is news to me."

"Perhaps. But if you admired Blonde Bill, as you claim, why did you allow him to be arrested for your crime?"

"I will tell you," the girl answered, frankly. "My father saw me do the shooting, and came up here and locked me up in my room; then went back and plotted with Vernon for Blonde's Bill's death. I was powerless to be of any assistance."

## CHAPTER X.

IN THE SILENT TONGUES' "POCKET."—ROSEBUD ROB TAKES A JOB.

LET us return to Deadwood Dick, otherwise Blonde Bill, whom we left in the power of the strange masked rescuers, who were, of course, the gang of cutthroats that for several months had spread a reign of terror throughout the Animas by their bold deeds.

For several minutes they continued through the fissure, finally emerging into what proved to be a second plateau or spot of level land, which was totally locked in by perpendicular mountains that rose on every side to a height of a hundred and fifty feet or more. This apparently was the Silent Tongues' retreat, for evidences of a permanent camp were plentifully strewn about. About every dozen yards round the edges of the "pocket," stakes and poles were erected for holding kettles over a fire, and close to these large niches or caves had been blasted out of the mountain rock, which provided sufficient shelter and living room for a couple of men and horses. In all, there were some thirty of these fire-places and caves.

As soon as the band debouched into the valley, they separated, and made for their respective quarters, with the exception of the leader and two others, one of whom kept guard over Blonde Bill, and the mask who had demurred at the arrest of the blonde man.

As the reader has probably surmised, this was Calamity Jane in disguise.

A motion of Raphael, the lieutenant under Captain Terrible's command, directed the prisoners to be removed to one of the caves, and closely guarded, until he gave further orders.

The mask was removed from Calamity's face, and her arms were bound behind her.

Then she and Blonde Bill were both con-

ducted to an untenanted cave, and left to make the best of their situation, a guard being stationed at the entrance to prevent them from escaping.

When they were alone in each other's presence, Blonde Bill turned to the girl dare-devil in surprise.

"Calamity," he said, "I am somewhat puzzled. Can you solve what is bothering me? Here I am snatched from the gallows, as I first supposed, by friends, but later I find out by enemies. And yet, I find you also among them—a prisoner!"

"Ha, ha! Yes. I am among them a prisoner," Calamity replied. "I got fooled, ye see, an' thet 'counts for it. D'ye know who thet gang o' fellers is?"

"The Silent Tongues, I have surmised, since seeing you a prisoner."

"Good guess. You hit it correct. D'ye want me to tell you how I came to be a prisoner?"

"Yes. Tell me if you like."

Accordingly the girl narrated how she had, on learning of the disposition to be made of Blonde Bill, fled to seek aid from Raphael, one of Deadwood Dick's old men; how Raphael had consented to render assistance, and how, when the rescue had been effected, Raphael pronounced her his prisoner, and threatened her with instant death if she offered resistance.

"So, you see how it comes I'm here," she said, in conclusion. "I got fooled in my man, and now all I ask, is to get just one pop at him with my pistol."

"I am under most lasting obligations to you," Blonde Bill said, gratefully, "for had it not been for me, you would not be here in this unenviable position. But have you any idea whom you have been serving?"

"A suspicion that you were—were Deadwood Dick has flashed over me, but I have not given it a second thought."

"Yet I am that very party," he said, with a strange smile. "Had I the use of my hands, I could soon convince you."

"Can it be true? I am so glad," Calamity said, her colour quickening—her voice softening. "It seems almost too good to be true. We have been old acquaintances so long, you know."

"Of course we have, Calamity, and I am perhaps as glad to see you as you are to see me."

"But, Dick, Rosebud Rob said that Blonde Bill lost a wife by the outlaw attack in San Juan canyon. Can it be possible that it was your wife?"

"Yes, it was Edith," the ex-outlaw said, huskily. "She was shot and killed instantly, leaving me again a widower. Poor Edith! she was a dear, faithful little



woman, Calamity, as pure as the snow upon the crest of the sierras."

"I sympathise with you, Dick," the strange girl said, earnestly.

Then she turned away, lest the yearning, hungry look in her wildly beautiful eyes should pain him.

Later he broke the silence:

"We're in a fix, Calamity, and we must get out of it. I've dodged death so many times, that I don't intend to give up the ghost yet."

The guard stood in the entrance in an attitude of listening; so they retired to a further corner of the cave, and sat down beside each other.

"Yes, we must get out," the girl declared; "but I'm afraid we shan't be successful in doing it." This remarkable retreat is well guarded, no doubt, and it would take some figgerin' ter dodge 'em."

"You are right," Deadwood Dick replied. "But we'll keep a watch, and take advantage of any favourable circumstances that may offer. You say the man who ordered us to be sent to this cave is Raphael, of my old Black Hills gang?"

"The same. He is now, I take it, the lieutenant in active command of these Silent Tongues."

The day passed away slowly.

At noon the guard before the entrance of the cave was relieved by another masked outlaw, but try how they would, the prisoners could not get a word out of them. Their title of Silent Tongues was well bestowed.

Shortly after noontide, another outlaw entered the cave, and to the surprise of both Dick and Calamity, cut their bonds from their hands and feet.

Then he left the cave, and, speaking a few words to the guard, both went off together.

"There, now! will you tell me what that means?" Calamity demanded, when they had gone. "It looks as if somebody had changed his mind mighty sudden."

"It means that we are to have the freedom of the valley, I presume. At least, we'll take it, until otherwise warned," Dick replied.

He tore away the green goggles from his eyes, and also removed the blonde wig and moustache, and stood there before her, handsome and fearless—Deadwood Dick.

"You see it's I!" he said, smiling.

"Yes, it is you, minus your raven curls and moustache—the same Dick whom I knew up in the hills."

They shook hands warmly, and then took a peep out into the mountain-locked valley.

The light and sunshine of day shone down into it pleasantly from overhead, and made it seem more like the outer world.

Standing near the mouth of their cave, the two captives surveyed the scene with a sharp gaze. Few of the outlaws were abroad—a half dozen, all told, being engaged in sifting sand, which formed the bottom of the pocket at the further side of the valley.

These fellows and their occupation attracted the attention of Deadwood Dick, and he watched them narrowly.

"I believe they're mining gold over there, Calamity," he said, "and if such is the case, this is a good find. The outlaws have no right to it, and it is mine and yours. Do you hear? We must possess this cosy retreat ourselves."

\* \* \* \* \*

We will go back to Rosebud Rob and the minister's daughter.

The sport was silent for some time following Miss Van Syckel's last words, as if weighing them in his mind.

"Then you are not in league with your father in this villainy?" he asked.

"I am not," she replied. "In fact, I have not had the least suspicion that he was not doing right, until the attack of the Silent Tongues upon the stage in San Juan canyon. Then I heard him give vent to the whistle that was instrumental in causing the retreat of the outlaws, and knew for the first time he was in some way connected with them. I questioned him, on reaching our home, here, but he professed to be awfully religious, and horror-stricken at the suspicions I entertained of him. Later, however, I played eaves-dropper, when he was holding a private confab with the man from Ohio, who is in reality my father's own brother, and learned that Vernon is the Grand Chief and my father the captain of the Silent Tongues."

"Ah! I thank you, miss, for your frankness, in telling me all this, as it puts me in a condition to fight these outlaw fiends, and rescue Deadwood Dick and Calamity Jane from their power."

"Do you mean to say that Deadwood Dick is now in the power of the Silent Tongues?"

"Both he and Calamity Jane. The party of masked men who rescued Blonde Bill from being lynched turned out to have been some of these self same Silent Tongues, under one Raphael."

"Indeed? I am sorry for them, as they will probably be shown no mercy at the hands of the outlaws."



"But I intend to go to their rescue. While Rosebud Rob luxuriates round these parts, the Silent Tongues will find that they have one hard nut to crack. But I want you to furnish me the information how to reach the headquarters of the band."

"I am sorry, but I cannot do that."

"Why not?"

"Because it would not only betray my father to death, but bring down the vengeance of the other outlaws upon me."

"Fear not. No harm shall come to you. If you wish to uphold your father in a life of crime, keep your secret, and I will see what can be done for you in the way of a hempen collar. Guide me and my party to the den of these outlaws, and I'll guarantee that no harm shall come to you."

Miss Van Syckel arose from her chair, and paced across the room and back, her face the scene of many struggling emotions.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," she said, finally. "I'll dress up in men's clothes, and guide you to the entrance to the Silent Tongues' retreat, for five hundred dollars, and the promise that I shall have my liberty to go where I please, when I have done as I have agreed. The cash you must pay now, for, as soon as I have done with you, I shall immediately fly to another part of the country, in order to escape being killed."

"It's a bargain," Rosebud accepted, quickly. "Here are five hundred dollars. Mind you, now you're in my service exclusively, and not in the employ of Captain Terrible."

"I'll not forget it. When will you want me?"

"To-night, just at dusk. That will be the best time to make a start."

"Very well; I will be ready," the minister's daughter said, after which Rosebud took his departure.

As he descended the stairs to the verandah he met the deputy-sheriff, George Garwood.

He flushed a little, as he caught the sport's stern gaze, but raised his hand and motioned for him to stop, which Rosebud accordingly did.

"Beg your pardon, sir," the deputy said, "but I was directed to hand you a little paper—a challenge, by the way, from the Honourable Ray Vernon."

And as he concluded, he extended an envelope, which the sport received with a smile of thanks.

"An answer is wanted, I presume?" he said, as he tore it open.

"A verbal one is all that is necessary, I guess, sir," was the reply.

The challenge was written upon a single sheet of paper, and ran as follows:

"MR. ROSEBUD ROB, SIR,—

"As you have on several occasions insulted me, publicly, and as I am a man of high rank and social standing, it becomes me to challenge you to meet me, in mortal combat, at any time or place which may best suit you, the weapons to be revolvers at thirty paces each way from the centre. I would respectfully suggest that you would name an early moment for our meeting.

"HON. RAY VERNON."

Rosebud Rob read the challenge, a smile breaking over his countenance.

"I think I see into this matter already," he said, turning to Garwood. "You have informed the Silent Tongues how I took the liberty to invade their privacy, and they of course are inspired with a desire to send me to heaven in a Pullman-car. So the Right Honourable Ray Vernon, member of the Devil's Congress, takes this method of giving me a chance for a through ticket. Well, well, I don't know that I have any objections to giving him a whirl, and so you may tell him that I will meet him in the 'Red Wine' saloon, just above here, one hour hence, and we'll plug away at each other. But, mind you, see to it yourself that no gun-games are tried on me, or Silverton will need a new deputy-sheriff."

"Do you s'pose I'd have anything to do with an unfair settlement?" Garwood demanded, with an air of injured innocence.

"I couldn't say. My motto is—watch your neighbours as you would yourself!" the sport rejoined, while Garwood turned away with a growl.

Rosebud Rob then hunted up Beautiful Bill and Old Avalanche, and found them in a saloon, engaged in a quiet game of cards, which the giant won.

When the sport made known to them the challenge he had received and accepted, Beautiful Bill gave a snort of delight.

"I intend to teach the dog a lesson," said Rosebud; "and I want you two to be present, and see that there is no unfair deal."

"On course we will—great ham-bone, yes; an' mebbe the Death Committee will get er chance ter work a consarned old disease o' annihilation," the Annihilator suggested.

Accordingly they all left the saloon and started for the "Red Wine," which resort was famous in the history of Silverton as the scene of many a bold duel and free-fight.

As they entered the great apartment of the building, which was used for bar-room,



gambling, and fighting, they saw that Vernon was not there.

But he entered shortly afterwards, accompanied by the deputy-sheriff, and a couple of rough-looking, bewhiskered miners.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ROSEBUD ROB MAKES HIS MARK.

THE condition of his eyes was plain evidence that he had been drinking deeply, as was the unsteadiness of his gait; but he had apparently not as yet fully satisfied his appetite, for he immediately stepped up to the bar and called for the drinks for his party, which were promptly produced, paid for, and quaffed.

The Ohioan then turned away from the bar, and crossed with unsteady steps to where Rosebud Rob stood leaning against a tier of liquor barrels that were ranged along the side of the room opposite the bar.

"Hallo! it's you, is it?" he demanded, in a thick tone. "You're the man that wants to fight me?"

"I am undoubtedly the same party," was the sport's response. "I believed I received a challenge from you, to meet you at this place."

"Yes, curse you! You are a little too important to suit my style, and so I thought I'd comb you down a little, just for the fun of it. Are you ready, you puppy?"

"I am at your command, but, as a friend, I'd advise you to wait until some other time, when your nerves are more quiet, and you are sober. You are drunk now, and in no condition to fight a duel."

"You lie!" the other shouted, and the next instant he raised his hand, and made a pass at Rosebud's face.

The agile sport parried the blow with his left arm, while with his right fist he dealt the villain a blow between the eyes that felled him to the floor.

"There! pick up your rooster and sponge him off, if he's going to do any business with me," Rob said, turning to the deputy-sheriff. "The next time he tries to slap me in the face, I'll knock him clean out of time."

Garwood and his companions hastened to assist their man to his feet, for he had only been stunned by the sledge-hammer blow; and while they were bathing the swelling forehead, Rosebud Rob turned to the crowd who had collected to learn the nature of the case.

"Tell you how it is, gents," he said, "while my opponent is doctoring up. He,

a man totally unknown to me as far as acquaintance goes, challenged me to come here and meet him in duel. As I never refuse a soft snap like that, I came, when the party of the first part attempted to slap me in the countenance, but got fooled as to the nature o' the beast. I'm not to blame for that, am I?"

"Great auriferous ham-bone, no!" cried Old Avalanche, and the crowd universally echoed his sentiment.

"On course ye ain't to blame!" declared Beautiful Bill, striding forward. "Ther Ohio pole-cat wanted ter slap yer 'cross the vocabulary-trap, but ye give ther Buck-eye galoot ther purtiest slap that ever emanated from ther fist o' mortal man. All in favour o' the carryin' o' this resolution will make manifeste by sayin' 'Ay'!"

"Ay!" "Ay!" "Ay!" was the hearty response.

"Carried by a big majority, an' laid on ther table o' ther house, instid o' on ther floor, as ther Congressman war!" the giant cried, with a broad grin.

By this time the assailant's forehead was bathed, and he was regaled with a "brandy smash." He then turned and glared at Rosebud Rob, savagely, while Garwood cried:

"Now, gentlemen, please git to either side o' the room, an' let the duellists have the ends, and we will see how the Honourable Ray Vernon, of Ohio, will scoop it to the snoozer with the few waxed hairs upon his upper lip!"

"Oh! yas, we will, won't we?" Beautiful Bill snorted, with a caper. "We'll see ther sport a-climbin' the golden stairs in about two jerks o' a pig's narrative, we will, no doubt. Tell ye what I'll do, pilgrims—I'll bet a solid pound o' pure auriferous wi' ary mortal man that Rosebud Rob makes ther Ohio galoot howl!"

"Who are you, that you interfere in this matter?" Vernon demanded, fiercely.

"You let him alone," Rosebud Rob advised. "He knows who and what you are, as the whole town will before I'm through with you. Come! get to your place, if you insist upon fighting with me, though I would prefer you would wait until you are in a better condition."

"I am ready. If, however, you are afraid to meet me, I can, perhaps, find it convenient to let you off."

"I am not afraid to meet a dozen of your sort, sir, providing they don't come too fast," was the answer. "Take your place, and let's get to business!"

Both men now took their relative positions—the sport with his back against the door opening into the street, and the



Ohioan with his back against the rear wall of the cabin.

The spectators were ranged upon each side, leaving an alley for the duellists.

"Now, gentlemen, let's know the terms of this engagement?" Garwood cried, "and we'll try to keep order!"

"We won't only try, but we'll do thet leetle same!" Beautiful Bill declared. "Ary ill-timed galoot that shows endicashuns of treachery, will I spot right squar' atween ther eyes wi' one o' my patent love-pellets."

"The terms of the duel are that we fight with pistols, an' don't quit till one or t'other of us yells for quits!" Rosebud Rob announced.

"I beg to amend that resolution," Vernon growled. "We'll shoot till one or the other of us is dead!"

"Just as you like!" Rosebud assented. "I was inclined to be merciful, but if you object, I have no reason to complain."

"Then git ready, for gracious sake!" cried Beautiful Bill. "I'm anxious to see sun gore spilt. Pull yer pistolic perforators now, an' w'en ye heer my clarion notes yell—'one! two! three!'—let yer luv-pellets slide!"

The two men drew their weapons, and stepped forward, a pace from the wall.

The sport grasped a pair of heavy Colt revolvers; the Ohioan had a pair, if anything, larger and more formidable than his opponent's. Up came the right hands of the two duellists, and as they rose to a level, Beautiful Bill, with a quick eye to business, shouted:

"One! two! three! Ther rooster crows an' away she goes!"

Then the report of two weapons echoed through the room, with roaring effect, and there was a faint groan of pain, coming from the Ohioan. The sport's bullet had torn a passage through the fleshy portion of his left cheek, making an ugly-looking wound, which bled profusely.

"Time!" Garwood ordered.

"Yas! giv' 'im time ter rub down his charger, an' sponge off his cheek," snorted the big Leadvilleite, capering about in the most undignified manner.

Time was accordingly given to bathe the wound of the Ohioan and bandage it, he, meanwhile, cursing like a pirate.

"Such treatment is only fit for a dog," he growled. "The next time I'll kill the villain outright."

"Yas, ye will!" roared the Leadville giant. "The next time my pard, the sport, 'll knock you 'way out of time, mebbe, an' put another wrinkle in yer cheek!"

This elicited a laugh from the spectators,

and also increased the rage of the Ohioan; but he wisely suppressed it.

He took his place again, and the revolvers once more came to a level; there was a flash and a report, as Beautiful Bill gave the signal to fire.

The result was that the Ohioan gave vent to another howl of pain and rage. The second bullet of the sport had ploughed another furrow, this time through the right cheek!

"Kerwhoop! converted polecats an' old tarant'lers! what did I tell ye, pilgrims? I sed ther sport w'u'd make ther Buckeye galoot howl—offered ter bet on it, an' nary a pilgrim durst ring me a deal. Ho! ho! whar's ther man who now sez thet ther sport ain't a reg'lar seckond edishion o' true grit an' straight-grained bulldosian? Whar?"

Nowhere, apparently—at least, the tide of admiration seemed pretty evenly centred upon the sport.

Neither of the Ohioan's bullets had done the sport any damage, and he stood at his end of the room as cool and calm, literally, as an iceberg, while the Honourable Ray Vernon hopped round in a high state of pain and rage.

"Time! curse you!" he gasped. "Garwood, you fool, tie up this side. I'll murder that demon if I die a-doing it!"

"A solid pound o' pure, unalloyed auriferous carryeth I down in ther left pocket o' my durned old bricheloons, wot sez ye're a durned old liar, a blowhard, an' er fit associate fer my mother-in-law's leetle yaller dorg!" said the giant. "Bet? On course ye won't! A mule kin tell w'ch way ther wind blows by ther way ther straw goes, ev'ry day in a week, an' he's a durned ring-nosed, lop-eared, slab-sided, long-legged son uv a Hoosher skulemaster, w'at bucks agin' ther judgment uv a mule or his driver."

For the second time the Ohioan suffered the pain of having his wound dressed and bandaged; then he once more took his position, trembling with rage when he realised that his beauty was in all probability for ever spoiled by the bullets of the sport.

"Do you still want more?" Rosebud Rob demanded. "I could have killed you either shot, had I chosen. I'd advise you to throw up, for your own sake, as none of your bullets come anywhere near me, and if you continue, you'll only get the worst of it!"

"That's none of your business as long as I choose to stand the brunt!" was the fierce answer. "Ready!"

Once more the weapons came to a level, and Beautiful Bill gave the word. Once



more there were two flashes—two reports—a howl of pain.

The Ohioan's pistol-hand hung helpless and bleeding by his side, the wrist shattered by one of the large bullets from the sport's revolver. A faint streak of blood oozing out in the neighbourhood of the sport's ear told where his opponent's bullet had left a trifling "kiss."

"I have got enough!" the Ohioan said, savagely—"at least, until I get able to use my hand!" then, turning, he staggered from the room, followed by Garwood and the two miners who had entered with them.

Rosebud gazed after them, a smile hovering about his lips, as he lit a fresh cigar.

"Gentlemen," he said, sarcastically, "I have the honour of introducing you to four members of the outlaw gang known as the Silent Tongues. Yonder they go, headed by the Right Honourable Ray Vernon, of Ohio."

A cry of surprise came from the crowd.

"You don't mean to say *their* deputy sheriff, too?" a miner cried.

"I do, precisely," Rosebud replied. "I happened to spy around and get into the meeting-house of the Silent Tongues last night, and learned so much that his honour from Ohio challenged me to fight, naturally expecting, no doubt, to get the best of me."

"Then you charge those men with being members of the outlaw gang, eh?" another bystander demanded, pulling out his revolvers.

"I do," the sport replied—"at least, the deputy-sheriff and the Ohioan, and it is not improbable that if you would take off the false beard of one of those miners, you'd find his nibs, the Reverend Lester Van Syckel, who is the real Captain Terrible!"

This was enough, for, with a shout of vengeance, a number of the crowd sprang in pursuit of the outlaws, who had left the saloon while the sport was speaking.

But the pursuers arrived in the outer world just in time to gaze with chagrin upon four horsemen that were flying down the gulch at a safe distance, out of rifle-range, and bound mountainward.

Rosebud Rob turned to Avalanche and Beautiful Bill, with a shake of the head.

"I'm afraid that they'll get to the stronghold ahead of us now. If Miss Van Syckel is ready, we will start at once."

He left them, and betook himself hastily to the Leviathan Hotel, where he was so fortunate as to meet the pseudo-minister's daughter in the main hall. On explaining matters, she signified her willingness to get ready at once.

She then ascended to prepare, while Rosebud hunted up horses for the party.

They were presently joined by Miss Van Syckel, who was disguised as a young miner, in an admirable manner.

A mount was at once made, and the party set off in a direction opposite to that taken by Vernon, at Miss Van Syckel's advice.

"There are two routes to the rendezvous, or rather, to the neighbourhood of it," she explained, as they rode along, "and I will take you over the least dangerous, for I have heard father describe both roads."

"Do you apprehend danger, then?" Rosebud Rob demanded.

"Yes. The Silent Tongues may have a suspicion of an attempt to rescue Deadwood Dick, and will guard against it."

## CHAPTER XII.

### RAPHAEL'S PLOT.—INTO A TRAP.

THE day passed quietly at the stronghold of the Silent Tongues, and night at last fell upon the earth with its sombre shadows. Neither Deadwood Dick nor Calamity ventured far out into the valley, but kept closely in the neighbourhood of their cave.

Once Dick went as far as the passage that was the entrance and exit of the "pocket," but found it guarded by two masked and well-armed outlaws. He saw that escape here was out of the question, unarmed as he was, and accordingly sauntered back to the cave.

As the darkness closed in, their former guard entered the cave, bearing a lighted lantern, and a tray of steaming roast venison, a pot of coffee, and some cold biscuits, which he deposited, and withdrew, without speaking.

"That fellow would not do to be Mother Grundy's servant," Calamity observed, drily. "Nobody is qualified for that position except a man who can talk."

"You should say, rather, a woman who can talk," Dick replied, with a smile. "But I should be pleased to know to whom we are indebted for this feast. Prisoners are seldom treated thus."

"Perhaps Raphael's conscience is working on him, and he is whackin' up," the girl suggested. "It's strange we do not see or hear something from him. Don't you think so?"

"A little queer, maybe, but I am not at all eager to see him again, as his next coming may bode us no good."

"True! Indeed, I believe these Silent



Tongues are hatching up some fiendish means of getting rid of us."

"No. I think they are waiting for the arrival of their leader, Captain Terrible, whom I believe to be either the Ohioan, Vernon, or the minister, Van Syckel."

They were not again disturbed that night, and after finishing the enjoyable repast, Calamity lay down to sleep, while Deadwood Dick kept guard near the entrance.

Early on the following morning the man Raphael made his appearance at the cave, unmasked.

Dick and Calamity were seated at the rude table, with which their abode was furnished, engaged in finishing the remnants of the last night's meal, when he entered, and bowed pleasantly.

"Pray excuse my intrusion," he said, politely. "I thought I'd look in upon you, having a bit of news to communicate. I suppose you know me, Deadwood Dick?"

"I do," Dick replied, as courteously as though he had been addressing a friend, instead of an enemy. "Calamity informed me whom I was indebted to for my rescue from Judge Lynch, and my subsequent captivity here."

"You are not having a very serious time here, I should judge," Raphael replied, with a smile. "Indeed, I did not intend you should have, after I deliberated on the fact that we were once master and man. I've a little plan to unfold, however, if you will give me your attention, which I think we can manage to our mutual satisfaction."

"My ears are open. Go ahead, and your words will receive due weight from me," Deadwood Dick said in return, and Calamity echoed his words by a nod.

"Well, to begin with, you may not have heard that this hidden pocket is in truth a valuable gold-mine?"

"No, I never heard so, but have suspected as much since coming here."

"Then you have suspected rightly, for it is a richer gold-field than has ever yet been discovered in this part of the State. This is unknown to any persons, with your exceptions, outside of the band."

"Well?"

"Well, there are certain members of the band who have become tired of this general outlawry, and want to dissolve with the others. But, at the same time, they are not willing to bid farewell to the gold-mine, and therefore, there the matter stands."

"Why do these fellows wish to draw off?" Dick demanded.

"They are boys whom some mistake in

life has forced to take up the life of outlaws, but who are not criminals at heart, nor by desire. That's why they wish to draw off from the others, whose ruffianly cravings are only for murder and plunder."

"How do the respective numbers stand?"

"There is a large majority of those who wish to disband, and they are the best men. The gang was considerably larger until the fight in San Juan Canyon, when a number were killed."

"A half a dozen or so of whom you can credit to me, probably," Deadwood Dick reminded. "Do you know who killed my wife?"

"I have no idea. Did I know, I would unhesitatingly inform you."

"All I want is to meet the man. I'll vouch that he'll never kill another woman," the ex-Prince of the Road said, bitterly. "But why are you telling me all this about the outlaws? How does it interest me?"

"We want you to lead us, and we will put out the roughest of the gang, and keep the valley for ourselves. There is enough for us all, and we can hold the valley like a charm."

And the lieutenant laughed at his own proposition.

"But supposing I were inclined to accept your proposition—what assurance have I that I should have my liberty afterwards?"

"The assurance, sir, that I was formerly one of your followers, and in making you our leader, will be yours to command again, as will be the others."

"Very well. I will accept the position of command, with the understanding that we are miners and citizens, and not outlaws. I will demand the right to keep Calamity Jane here if she chooses to stay, and also three other friends to whom I am deeply indebted."

"Very well. I have consulted with our boys already, and they are willing to go under your leadership, and give you full power to do what you can for the mutual benefit of the company."

"How will you manage to get rid of the other portion?"

"Easy enough. They are now all sleeping off the effects of a drug that was administered to them in their tea last night. They cannot recover consciousness before noon, and by that time we can have them all lugged out of the valley to a safe distance from it. There they will be left to recover. When they recover, each will find pinned to his coat a paper, warning him that Deadwood Dick has taken possession and charge of the valley, with a



large force of men, and any attempt on the excluded outlaws' part to enter the valley will be punished by instant death. How like you the plan, Captain Harris?"

"Good! Unless the excluded outlaws haunt the vicinity of the exit of the valley, and make us trouble when we go in and out for provisions."

"I don't think they will, as there has already been talk among them of going down into New Mexico, and joining the La Muerte brothers' band."

"Well, go ahead, and follow your course of action according to your plan, and we'll see how things work!" Deadwood Dick commanded. "It is a safe shell, at all events, and perhaps I can find peace here—a last home-base, as it were."

The lieutenant bowed, and at once took his departure.

An hour later, the work of removing the bodies of the drugged outlaws from the valley was commenced, and by noon not a trace of them was left to tell the tale of the former existence of the Silent Tongues.

In the meantime, Deadwood Dick and Calamity sauntered from one cave to another, and made an inspection of the quarters, after which they returned to their own cave.

Shortly afterwards, Lieutenant Raphael marshalled his men before the entrance, and Dick was called forth to review them, which he did, and made a brief but appropriate address, which was received with enthusiastic applause. Then Raphael proposed three cheers for the new commander, which were given, and the band separated.

A strong guard had been stationed at both ends of the remarkable passage which furnished the mode of entrance and exit of the secret gold-pocket, and thus everything was satisfactorily arranged, without bloodshed or battle.

During the early afternoon, as Raphael and Deadwood Dick stood in the valley, engaged in conversation, a guard approached them, and raised his hat in a respectful manner.

"If you please, captain, there's one o' the old gang outside the pocket, who has important orders, he says, from Captain Terrible, for Lieutenant Raphael."

"Show him in at once," ordered Deadwood Dick. "We will see what he has to say for himself."

The guard bowed and took his departure, but returned ere long, accompanied by one of the rough-looking miners, who had escaped with Vernon and Garwood from Silverton.

"Ah! Yelverton, is that you?" Raphael demanded. "What brings you here, sir?"

"I came from the captain, sir. Four of us had to take flight from Silverton to escape Judge Lynch. We were betrayed by a fellow who is called Rosebud Rob. But we've got him, and a party of two others, hedged in, down a matter o' six miles from here, and want ther gang ter come down and help finish him up. They were comin' to rescue Deadwood Dick, but we've rung in a deal on 'em, an' got 'em cornered where they can't fight out."

"Very well. Go tell Captain Terrible that I will fetch down a part of the gang before long," Raphael said. "I would come now at once, but have some other matters to look to first. Be spry now, and convey my answer to the captain at once!"

The outlaw nodded, and took his departure from the valley.

When he had gone, Deadwood Dick turned to Raphael, inquiringly.

"Well," he demanded, "what do you make of it?"

"Just what the fellow said. They've got Rosebud Rob and his companions cornered in some tight place, and all we've got to do is to take part of our men and go and help them out. Do you see?"

"But while we are absent, will not the men you bounced from the valley regain possession?"

"No. Half of our thirty men will hold the valley, and with the other half we can effect the rescue. Leave Calamity Jane in charge here, and she'll attend to it, while you accompany me."

Accordingly it was so arranged.

Calamity was left in full charge of the valley, with fifteen men under her command, and with the other fifteen Deadwood Dick and Raphael soon rode out from the secret valley, bound for the rescue.

All were well armed and masked, and with Raphael in the lead, they dashed away down the mountain trail at breakneck speed.

\* \* \* \* \*

We must now return to Rosebud Rob and his party, whom we left on their way towards the stronghold of the Silent Tongues, bent on the rescue of Deadwood Dick and Calamity Jane.

Nora Van Syckel led the advance at a rapid gallop, and the others followed but a short distance behind.

The route chosen by her was the same as that taken by the Silent Tongues when they had rescued Blonde Bill, and was extremely rough and tortuous, leading through deep, dark chasms, and frightful mountainous places, such as none of our three friends had ever encountered before.

About mid-afternoon, Miss Van Syckel



drew rein, and waited for the others to come up.

"You had better stop here a few minutes, until I go round yonder bend and reconnoitre," she said, slipping from the saddle, and giving her bridle-rein to the sport. "There is a place there where an enemy could lie in ambush, and once you entered the trap, they'd have you, before you could think of it. If the route is all clear, and safe, I will blow a little silver whistle, and you can come on, and fetch my horse with you. Just round the bend the canyon forks into two. Take the left-hand one and follow it until you find me waiting for you."

Then, taking her rifle, she strode rapidly on up the gulch, until she was out of sight.

"I'll bet she discovers the outlaws, and we shall have to go back, and round the other way," Rosebud observed. "Somehow, I don't trust her just as I would an angel, for all I hired her fairly."

"Great ham-bone, no, ner I nuther," Old Avalanche declared. "These weemin' ar' ther deceitfulest uv all critters on 'arth, takin' 'em as they come, on an average. Thar war old Methusler Hopensberry, up at Shian—durnedest old cattymount ye ever see'd, I swar! Tell ye w'at she did oncet. She cum down ter my ranch, an' axed me ter marry her, an' I consented. After we got hitched, aw'ile, she coaxed me ter git my life insured for forty million dollars, an' I, like a big fule, I did that same. Waal, sir, one night she tuk me at an advantage when I was asleep, an' threw me in a boat an' sent me down ther river. Then she collected the forty million an' skipped out. Fact, too!"

"Hark!" Rosebud Rob cried. "I thought I heard the whistle!"

They all listened, but there came no second sound of the kind.

The minutes passed by to the number of fifteen or more; then a shrill whistle from the distance was borne to their hearing.

"All's right! so come along," the sport exclaimed; and putting the spurs to their horses, they dashed up the canyon.

Past the bend they swept, and discovered the forks in the canyon as Nora had advised. Taking the left-hand one, they continued on for several minutes—then stopped abruptly.

Before them loomed up a perpendicular towering barrier of solid rock—ahead and on each side of them.

They had entered a blind canyon, and were trapped!

Full well they realised this, when, at the sound of a low laugh, they looked back, and saw that they were covered by a trio of

rifles, which were levelled towards them by the outlaws—Vernon, Garwood, and Lester Van Syckel.

Betrayed by the latter's daughter, they were in an unenviable position.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CONCLUSION.

"HA! HA! you are surprised, are you not?" the Ohioan demanded, with a villainous smile. "The tables are somewhat turned, just about now!"

"In all probability," Rosebud Rob admitted, coolly. "It depends, however, upon your ability to keep us covered, whether we are long your prisoners or not."

"Oh! we'll hold the drop, don't you fear, until aid arrives," the minister announced, with a laugh, "and drop you in the most summary manner if you attempt to budge an inch. We don't bear you any particular amount of good will, and should deem it a pleasure to shoot you."

"I presume so. But I am shocked to observe how very impious your reverence is growing," was the sport's stinging retort.

At which the outlaw laughed again.

"I am sorry you have been so badly deceived in the ornament of the Silverton pulpit," he said.

"Not werry much deceived, ye consarned old polecat!" grunted Beautiful Bill. "We know'd ye were a blamed lop-sided, spindle-shanked sinner long ago. But we got most sucked in on ther female critter who led us inter ther trap. Consarn her purty mug! Beautiful Bill a're I, an' I do boldly swar, declare, an' asseverate thet ef I eveyr ketch my claws inter ther paraphernalyer uv thet gal, she won't never know wot struck her."

"Very likely; but she is safe out of your reach long ere this," the Ohioan assured, mockingly. "A clever young lady is Miss Van Syckel, to whom we are largely indebted for your easy capture."

Then there was a pause.

Rosebud Rob, Beautiful Bill, and Avalanche sat in their saddles quietly, believing it their best course not to make any more resistance.

The three outlaws stood a few yards away, and kept their rifles levelled at their captives steadily, evidently resolved to prevent any possible chance of escape.

"When your arms get tired, gentlemen, don't you dare to lower your weapons, for the chances stand ten to one that ere you can raise one of them again I can send in



"whole note!" Rosebud Rob warned. "I'm up to all such tricks, you know, and am not to be trusted."

This elicited a scowl from the three men, for the weapons were evidently growing heavy. And the fact that the sport's hand rested upon a pistol-butt suggested the thought that he wanted but the slightest gap left open by them to open the ceremonies.

"I guess we're good for a half-hour," the Ohioan said, "and by that time we shall have aid. The plan of your capture was prearranged, and so confident were we of its success that we sent a man to our stronghold for reinforcements, which must soon arrive."

Bravely did the three men keep their rifles up to a level with the captives' breasts, although it was evident that their arms must have ached excruciatingly.

And all the while the hawk-like eyes of the sport were turned upon them, watching for an unguarded point.

Thus five, ten, fifteen minutes—half an hour passed away; then there came rolling through the mountain corridors the blare of a trumpet.

A smile of triumph broke over the mock minister's countenance.

"Reinforcements," he said, with a smile, and the next minute he answered the signal with a piercing yell.

Soon, then, there came the clatter of hoofs, and a party of seventeen masked outlaws dashed up on horseback, Raphael in the lead.

"Cover yonder prisoners, lieutenant," the bogus minister cried, "and ease us, as we are near dead a-trying to keep them under the drop."

"You'll be dead in truth soon, unless Deadwood Dick chooses to spare your lives," was the reply.

"What mean you?" Vernon demanded.

"Cover them, boys!" Raphael commanded; and he was quickly obeyed. "I mean that it is you and your crowd who are now our prisoners, instead of Rosebud Rob and his party. The tables have turned just a little, you see. This man on my right is Deadwood Dick, and he at present, and for all time hereafter, com-

mands the gang. You are no longer included. The Silent Tongues have been merged into the Rough and Readies, under Deadwood Dick, and all the ruffian element has been bounced out. How like you the change?"

Horrible curses came from the three baffled villains, but they were too wise to draw weapons against such odds.

"Throw down your tools, gentlemen, and surrender," Deadwood Dick ordered, "or I shall direct my men to shoot you down on the spot."

They obeyed, and were made prisoners.

Rosebud Rob now rode forward, and was heartily received by Deadwood Dick, as were Bill and Avalanche. Then a general introduction took place, after which the whole party set out for the Golden Pocket.

\* \* \* \* \*

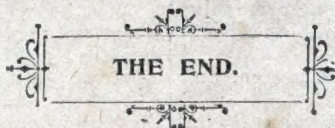
The three chief members of the former band, of Silent Tongues, Vernon, Van Syckel, and the deputy-sheriff, Garwood, begged so piteously for their lives and liberty, that Deadwood Dick finally concluded to let them have both, but first made them swear that, as soon as they were free, they would leave the mining country for ever. They were then set at liberty, never again to be seen in the region of the Rio de las Animas.

Later Rosebud Rob bade a final adieu to Golden Pocket and his friends there, and journeyed to the Nor-west, with the intention of taking to himself a wife in the person of a young lady whom her friends call Cinnamon Chip.

Golden Pocket, with its rich mines, is to-day a bonanza. And it has also proved to be the sheet-anchor of Richard of Deadwood, for he is still there, with his little band of friends around him, among whom are Calamity Jane, Old Avalanche, Beautiful Bill, and Raphael.

Peaceful and undisturbed, the band is mining the days away, out of the reach of the strong, stern arm of the law, and in the dim future, it is not improbable that Dick and Calamity will enter into a loving partnership for life, which long delayed consummation, we believe, our readers will welcome with:

Three cheers for Deadwood Dick!





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